

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND
PANCHAYATI RAJ
(2024-2025)**

4

EIGHTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT)**

[Action taken on the recommendations contained in the Thirty-Seventh Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on “Rural Employment through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) – An insight into wage rates and other matters relating thereto” (2023-24) of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development)]

FOURTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 17.12.2024

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 17.12.2024



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

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**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND
PANCHAYATI RAJ (2024-2025)**

Shri Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka - Chairperson

Lok Sabha Members

2. Shri Sandipanrao Asaram Bhumare
3. Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay
4. Shri Raju Bista
5. Shri Vijay Kumar Dubey
6. Dr. Sanjay Jaiswal
7. Shri Bhajan Lal Jatav
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9. Shri Jugal Kishore
10. Dr. D. Ravi Kumar
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14. Shri Kota Srinivasa Poojary
15. Shri K. Radhakrishnan
16. Shri Ramashankar Rajbhar
17. Shri Omprakash Bhupalsinh *alias* Pavan Rajenimbalkar
18. Shri Parshottambhai Rupala
19. Shri Devendra Singh *alias* Bhole Singh
20. Shri Ganesh Singh
21. Shri Vivek Thakur

Rajya Sabha Members

22. Smt. Geeta *alias* Chandraprabha
23. Shri H. D. Devegowda
24. Shri Samirul Islam
25. Shri Iranna Kadadi
26. Shri Nagendra Ray
27. Shri V. Vijayasai Reddy
28. Shri Anthiyur P. Selvarasu
29. Shri Sant Balbir Singh
30. Shri Vaiko
31. Vacant

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri D.R. Shekhar - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Vinay P. Barwa - Director
3. Shri L. Singson - Deputy Secretary
4. Shri Sudhanshu Shekhar - Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (2024-2025) having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present the 4th Report on the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Thirty-Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (17thLok Sabha) on 'Rural Employment through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) – An insight into wage rates and other matters relating thereto' (2023-24) of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development).

2. The Thirty-Seventh Report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 08.02.2024 and was laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 08.02.2024. Replies of the Government to all the recommendations contained in the Report were received on 12.06.2024.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 13.12.2024.

4. An analysis of the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Thirty-Seventh Report (17th Lok Sabha) of the Committee is given in **Appendix-II**.

NEW DELHI
13 December, 2024
22 Agrahayana, 1946 (Saka)

Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Rural Development and
Panchayati Raj

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (2024-25) deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in their Thirty-Seventh Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Rural Employment through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) – An insight into wage rates and other matters relating thereto' of the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) for the term 2023-2024.

1.2 The Thirty-Seventh Report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 08.02.2024 and was laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 08.02.2024. The Report contained 18 Observations/Recommendations.

1.3 Action Taken Notes in respect of all the 18 Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report have been received from the Government. These have been examined and categorised as follows: -

(i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:

Serial Nos. 1, , 7, 8, 9, , , 12, 15, 16, 17, 18

Total: 9

Chapter-II

(ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of replies of the Government:

Serial No. NIL

Total: NIL

Chapter-III

(iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee:

Serial No. 2, 3, 4, 5,6,10,11 13, 14

Total: 09

Chapter-IV

(iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited:

Serial No. NIL

Total: NIL

Chapter-V

1.4 The Committee desire that Final Action Taken Notes on the Observations/ recommendations contained in Chapter I of this Report may be furnished to the Committee within three months of the presentation of this Report.

1.5 The Committee will now deal with action taken by the Government on some of their Observations/Recommendations that require reiteration/merit comments.

I. Delay in the Release of Funds

Recommendation (Serial No. 2)

1.6 With regard to the Delay in the Release of Funds, the Committee had recommended as under:-

“The Committee find that availability of funds is one major aspect affecting the financial health of the scheme while the other area of equal importance is the often complained matter associated with the delay in the release of funds to the States. Proper implementation of the scheme totally hinges on the timely and adequate release of funds to all the States/UTs. Now the permissible works under MGNREGA have been widened further to include Natural Resource Management (NRM) works and hence the ambit of works under MGNREGA is further increasing day by day. However, on perusal of the information provided, Committee find that there are wage and material liabilities in respect of many of the States and UTs. In this regard, the Committee note the submission of DoRD that fund release is a continuous process and timely compliance of conditions by States for fund release is the important requirement. If any State could not comply the conditions in a timeline, it leads to delay in release of funds. Further, it is noted that there are delays in material payment and DoRD is trying to devise systems whereby these delays are removed or minimized. In this regard, the Committee are of the view that whatever may be the reasons for non-release of funds, the sufferers remain the poor and down-trodden beneficiaries of MGNREGA. The Committee, therefore, call upon the DoRD to address the grey areas surrounding the timely release of funds under MGNREGA and spruce up their financial mechanisms for ensuring that obstacles in the path of seamless release of funds under MGNREGA are removed so that MGNREGA works/beneficiaries do not have to suffer. In this regard, the Committee recommend that DoRD should take up the matter of delays in compliance of conditions with every State and UT and ensure that the funds for both wage and material components are released to all States/UTs without any delays.”

1.7 The DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as follows:-

“Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a demand driven wage employment Scheme. Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, States/UTs furnish funds release proposals to the Government of India. The Ministry releases funds periodically in

two tranches with each tranche consisting of one or more instalments, keeping in view the “agreed to” Labour Budget, demand for works, opening balance, pace of utilization of funds, pending liabilities, overall performance and subject to submission of relevant documents by the States/UTs.

First instalment of the first tranche is released in the first half of April after adjusting unspent balance available with the States and considering the pending liabilities, if any. The second tranche is released on submission of proposal in the prescribed format by the State and subject to fulfilment of all the prescribed conditions. The proposal for release of 2nd tranche can be submitted by the State/UT after utilization of 75% of the total available funds. If the proposal for second tranche is submitted after 1st October, then the Audit Report and Audited Utilization Certificate (UC) of the previous financial year are also required. Quantum of funds to be released as part of second tranche depends upon the performance of the States/UTs and compliance with other conditions for fund release.

Fund release to States/UTs is a continuous process and Central Government is committed in making funds available to States/UTs for the implementation of the Scheme as per the demand for work on the ground.

A total of 6 crore households were provided employment resulting in generation of 312.55 crore person days during FY 2023-24 and release of an amount of Rs.89,351.65 crore.

This Ministry regularly interacts and follows up with States/UTs Government regarding timely submission of prescribed documents in order to avoid delay in release of funds for implementation of scheme.”

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.8 The Committee note that the Department of Rural Development (DoRD) is highlighting only the States’ loopholes for the delay in release of funds both for wage and material components of scheme. The Committee is of the view that in as much as the delay is attributable to the States, the larger responsibility is of the Central Government in this regard. From the reply, it may be seen that the DoRD released funds under MGNREGA is based on the provision of the Act and rules framed under guidelines of the scheme and

have again elaborated on the existing mechanisms of funds release to States in two instalments i.e. 1st tranche in the 1st half of April and the 2nd tranche after 1st October and subject to fulfilment of all the prescribed conditions. The Committee find that the DoRD have also merely furnished their stereotypical reply delineating only the provisions of the scheme without addressing the core issue with the seriousness it warrants. Delving deep into the reply of the Ministry, the Committee are of the opinion that, had these provisions and mechanisms been functioning optimally, the issue of delay in fund release would not have arisen in the first instance. Thus there is a clear indication of lack of coherence between the enacted provisions and its applicability on ground level. The Committee, therefore, feel that there is an immediate need for a much more concerted and synchronised action between the Central and States' nodal agencies as the delay of funds release will add more misery and sufferings to the masses of poor people living in the rural areas.. In view of this, the Committee reiterate their recommendation for ensuring timely release of funds under MGNREGA with suitable measures so that the scheme's progress and payment of wages to the rural poor are unhindered.

II. Increase in wages under MGNREGA

Recommendation (Serial No. 3)

1.9 With regard to increase in wages under MGNREGA, the Committee had recommended as follows:-

"The Committee note that Section 6 of the Act defines the wage rate and also provides that notwithstanding anything contained in the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Central Government, may by notification, specify the wage rate for the purposes of the Act which may be different for different areas. The provision further implies that the wages so notified shall not be less than the wages guaranteed under Minimum Wages Act for agricultural labourers. The Committee feel that the need for having a wage guaranteeing rural employment

scheme of such a grand scale was emanated from the need of providing a sense of security in terms of employment and wage to the poor people in rural areas who does not have any other job avenue to look forward to. The Ministry notifies the wage rates under MGNREGA for each State/UT at the beginning of each financial year. After going through the notified wage rates under MGNREGA over the period of years and during the ongoing financial year, the Committee find the range of wages to vary from as little as Rs.221/- in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Rs. 224/- in Arunachal Pradesh, Rs. 228/- in Bihar and Jharkhand to Rs. 354/- in the 3 Gram Panchayats of Sikkim (namely Gnathang, Lachung and Lachen), Rs. 328/- in Nicobar and Rs. 311/- in Andaman. Observing the quantum of wages since 2008, the Committee find the wages inadequate and not in consonance with the rising cost of living. At this juncture, the agricultural labourers and other labourers involved in masonry/miscellaneous works command a daily wage more than the wage guaranteed under MGNREGA. Perhaps, one of the reasons for the dearth of MGNREGA workers to be engaged in the works under MGNREGA, may be the insufficiency of the wage rates under MGNREGA. Workers would definitely engage themselves in such projects/works which could earn them a better remuneration. This is indeed an area of concern vis-à-vis the implementation of MGNREGA along with the fulfilment of noble objectives and the spirit behind the inception of such a social scheme. It has been also brought to the notice of the Committee that a Central Government Committee on minimum wages, AnoopSatpathy Committee had recommended that the wages under MGNREGA should be Rs.375/- per day. The need for suitable increase in the wages under MGNREGA has been felt and echoed from various quarters and also highlighted by this Committee in its earlier Reports. Therefore, the Committee once again recommend that DoRD should take a considered view on the pertinent issue of suitable increase in the wage rates under MGNREGA and increase the wage rates at the earliest for benefitting MGNREGA beneficiaries in a befitting manner."

1.10 The DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as under:-

"Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a demand driven wage employment Scheme. It provides fall back options for livelihood security for the rural households, when no better employment opportunity is available.

As per Section 6 (1) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA), 2005, the Central Government may by notification specify the wage rate for its beneficiaries. Further, section 6 (2) of the Act, provide that until such time as a wage rate is fixed by the Central Government in respect of any area in a State, the minimum wage fixed by the State Government under section 3 of the Minimum wages Act, 1948 for Agricultural Labours shall be considered as the wage rate applicable to that area. Accordingly as per provision of Section 6(2) of the Act, from

the inception of the scheme till the financial year 2010-11, the wage rate in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA was determined on the basis of the minimum wage set by the State Government. However, from the financial year 2011-12, the Government of India started determining the wage rates using the Consumer Price Index for agricultural labour (CPI-AL).

To compensate the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers against inflation, the Ministry of Rural Development revises the wage rate every financial year based on change in Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL). **The index is different for different States/UTs as notified by Labour Bureau Shimla.** If the calculated wage rate of any State/UT is coming lower than the wage rate of previous year, it is being protected by maintaining the previous year wage rate. The wage rate is made applicable from 1st April of each financial year.

The overall % increase in wage rate for FY 2024-25 from the FY 2023-24 is about 7 %.

However, each State/UT can provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government.

State Governments of Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha were providing more than notified wage rates under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS from their own resources in last financial year 2023-24."

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.11 Observing the rate of wages paid under MGNREGA since 2008, the Committee find the amount inadequate and not in consonance with the rising cost of living. Taking up works under MGNREGA is a sort of last resort for many of the poor rural masses who do not have any other option of livelihood or job option to utilise but wages of such nominal nature sometime with delayed payment only discourage them and propel them to migrate and seek work in areas giving better remuneration. The Committee do understand that MGNREGA is a demand driven scheme where the workers move out in search of better opportunities. However, the figures are abysmally low and it definitely points towards low wage rates as one of the major reasons for the workers to opt out of MGNREGA, thereby hampering the percentage of work

completed under MGNREGA. The Committee have time and again urged DoRD to increase the wage rates under MGNREGA by linking it with an index commensurate with national inflation. But the wage rates under MGNREGA continue to remain stagnant on account of no change in indexation. Thus, the Committee once again make a strong appeal to the DoRD to review its stand and bring onboard all the stakeholders so as to increase the wage rates at the earliest for benefitting MGNREGA beneficiaries across all the States/UTs.

III. Revision of Base Rate for fixation of Wages

Recommendation (Serial No. 4)

1.12 In the context of Revision of Base Rate for fixation of Wages, the Committee had recommended as below:-

“The Committee note that the Government of India notifies the wage rate under MGNREGA using Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) and by keeping the wage rates thus obtained on 1st April 2009 or Rs.100 whichever is more as the base for indexation for the States. Every year, wage rates are revised and notified by addition of incremental value to the base rate on the basis of CPI-AL. According to DoRD, this inflation is being accounted for based on the base rate of 2009. The Committee find this method of calculation using the base year of 2009-2010 obsolete and saturated to yield any desired figure commensurate with the present inflation and increased cost of living. It is felt that one of the probable mechanism to sort out the issue of lower wage rates can be achieved through the revision of base year and the base rates to a more closer time line alongwith increase in the base rate. The similar rationale was also proposed by the recommendation of the Mahendra Dev Committee while suggesting that the baseline for MGNREGA Wage indexation from 2014 may be current minimum wage rate for unskilled agricultural labourers fixed by the States under the Minimum Wage Act or the current MGNREGA wage rate, whichever is higher. Thus, in light of the above rationale, the Committee recommend DoRD to explore the feasibility of revising the base year and base rate in such a manner to bring in an appreciable hike in the wage rates under MGNREGA.”

1.13 The following Action Taken Reply has been given by DoRD:-

“As per Section 6 (1) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, the Central Government may, by notification specify the wage rate for its beneficiaries of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Further, section 6 (2) of the Act, provide that until such time as a wage rate is fixed by the Central Government in respect of any area in a State, the minimum wage fixed by the State Government under section 3 of the Minimum wages Act, 1948 for Agricultural Labours shall be considered as the wage rate applicable to that area.

Accordingly, as per provision of Section 6(2) of the Act, from the inception of the scheme till the financial year 2010-11, the wage rate in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA was determined on the basis of the minimum wage set by the State Government. However, from the financial year 2011-12, the Government of India started determining the wage rates using the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL).

Government of India has notified the wage rate under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA vide Gazette Notification. S.O. 82(E) dated 14th January, 2011 in exercise of the power conferred by Section 6(1) of Mahatma Gandhi NREG act, using CPI-AL as index and kept the wage rates as these obtained on 1st April, 2009 or Rs. 100 whichever is more as the base for indexation for the States/UTs

To compensate the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers against inflation, the Ministry of Rural Development revises the wage rate every financial year based on change in Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL). **The index is different for different States/UTs as notified by Labour Bureau Shimla.** If the calculated wage rate of a state is lower than the wage rate of the previous financial year then it is protected by continuing the wage rate of the previous financial year. The wage rate is made applicable from 1st April of each financial year.

The overall % increase in wage rate for FY 2024-25 from the FY 2023-24 is about 7 %.”

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.14 Since the inception of MGNREGA, one aspect surrounding the scheme which has always intrigued the Committee is that of unrevised base rate for fixation of wages. The Government of India notifies the wage rate under MGNREGA using Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) and by keeping the wage rates thus obtained on 1st April, 2019 or Rs. 100 whichever is more as the base for indexation for the States. Every year wage rates are revised and notified by addition of incremental value to the base rate

on the basis of CPI-AL. The Committee find this method of calculation using the base year of 2009-2010 obsolete and saturated. The reply of DoRD in this regard has talked about the mechanism of revision of wage rates for each financial year without giving any befitting response to the novel idea recommended by the Mahendra Dev Committee. Remaining silent on such significant recommendation and bypassing it without giving specific reply undermines the sustained efforts being undertaken for the betterment of MGNREGA scheme. Thus, in light of the above rationale, the Committee reiterate their recommendation and urge the Ministry to explore the feasibility of revising the base year and base rate in such a manner to bring relief to the poor rural masses of the country who rely upon MGNREGA for their livelihoods.

IV. Utilisation of a better inflation linked index

Recommendation (Serial No. 5)

1.15 In the connection of Utilisation of a better inflation linked index, the Committee had made the following recommendation:-

“The Committee note that the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) is used by DoRD for calculating the revision of wage rates under MGNREGA at the start of each Financial Year. After scrutinizing the pattern of increase in the wage rates under MGNREGA using the CPI-AL, the Committee feel that the current index was perhaps not sufficient to take into account the inflation during the time-period under study. The usage of such index has not reflected requisite quantum of hike in the MGNREGA wages. Both Mahendra Dev Committee and Dr. Nagesh Singh Committee have suggested that Consumer Price Index for Rural (CPI-Rural) may be considered as the appropriate index for protecting the wages against inflation as the consumption basket of CPI-R is of more recent vintage than CPI-AL. However, after going through the comparative data obtained from the DoRD regarding the wage rates under MGNREGA on the basis of CPI-AL and CPI-Rural for the ongoing financial year, the Committee find both the indexation resulting in almost similar wage rates for different States/UTs barring few fluctuations. In this regard, the Committee are of the view that DoRD should perhaps find a better approach to the problem of selecting a more suitable index for neutralising the inflationary effect at the time of revision of wage rates

under MGNREGA. Hence, the Committee recommend that DoRD should adopt a much more economically viable method in identifying ways and means for the selection of an appropriate index which cater to the need of the hour for the positive revision of wage rates under MGNREGA according to the prevailing inflationary trend.”

1.16 In regard to the above recommendation, the DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as below:-

“It is submitted that, as per Section 6 (1) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, Central Govt. may, by notification, specify the separate wage rate for the beneficiary of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. The rate is revised on the basis of Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL).

Government of India has notified the wage rate under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA vide Gazette Notification S.O. 82(E) dated 14th January, 2011 in exercise of the power conferred by Section 6(1) of Mahatma Gandhi NREG Act, using CPI-AL as index and kept the wage rates as these obtained on 1st April, 2009 or Rs.100 whichever is more as the base for indexation for the States.

For protecting the wage against the inflation, it has been decided to index the wage rate notified under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA to the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) while maintaining the distinction between the notified wage rate under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA and the minimum wage Act. The overall % increase in wage rate for FY 2024-25 from the FY 2023-24 is about 7 %.”

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.17 The Committee opine that a long standing demand from various quarters of the country has been that of utilisation of a better inflation linked index for payment of wages to MGNREGA workers. The Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) is used by DoRD for calculating the revision of wage rates under MGNREGA at the start of each Financial Year. The Committee feel that the current index was perhaps not sufficient to take into account the level of inflation during the time-period under study. The usage of such index has not reflected requisite quantum of hike in the MGNREGA wages. The Committee in the wake of the non-yielding situation are seriously

concerned about the plight of the beneficiaries of MGNREGA who belong to extreme periphery of the society and for whom any increase in wage through suitable linkage with inflationary index, providing buffer against rising costs, would indeed be a blessing. In this context, the Committee reiterate their recommendation for adoption of a much more economically viable method in identifying ways and means for the selection of an appropriate index commensurate with the inflationary trend.

V. Mitigation of delay in Payment of Wages

(Recommendation Serial No. 6)

1.18 In the connection of mitigation of delay in payment of wages, the Committee had made the following recommendation:-

“The Committee note that the MGNREGA Act provides that the payment of wages should be done within fifteen days of the closure of muster rolls. However, the ground reality paints a stark picture contrary to the theoretical provision. The Committee have been enlightened time and again with this omnipresent issue of delay in payment of wages to the MGNREGA workers. Delving deep into the issue, the Committee, through their on-ground experiences and deliberations find that there are many reasons for delay in the payment of wages viz., delay/improper filling of Muster rolls, delayed release of Fund Transfer Orders, procedural hindrances at the ground level, non-adherence to provisions of MGNREGA for payment, etc. Instead of pointing to a single cause of concern, the Committee find that the reasons may vary place to place. Since the Committee feel that a holistic exercise need to be undertaken by the nodal agency, DoRD, to identify each issue separately and bring forward a stronger solution to deal with such issues, it is recommended that DoRD should get onboard all the stakeholders involved in the process of payment of wages to streamline the mechanism and ensure that MGNREGA beneficiaries do not suffer on account of delay in payment of wages any more.”

1.19 In regard to the above recommendation, the DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as below:-

“The Ministry has taken various steps to ensure timely payment of wages to workers under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. These include:

Up scaling of National Electronic Fund Management System (Ne-FMS) in 28 States and 3 Union Territories.

Intensive consultation with State Governments and other stakeholders to strategize timely payment of wages, verification of pending compensation claims etc.

Formulation of Standard Operating Procedure for monitoring of timely payment and payment of compensation.

Meetings with States/ UTs for reviewing the status of timely payment and payment of delay compensation.

States/UT's have been requested to ensure timely regeneration of rejected transaction and every fund release is tagged with priority release of rejected transaction.

Review meetings with Banks, NPCI and PFMS are conducted on a regular basis at central level to review the delays, if any and the stakeholders are directed to resolve the issues.

States/UTs have been requested to ensure correction of invalid accounts as per information provided by Public Financial Management System (PFMS).

Further, Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS) uses Aadhaar numbers to link a beneficiary's bank account with job cards, aiming to ensure faster, safer wage disbursement and reduce fraud under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Central Government is making wage payment directly into the Bank/ Post office account of the beneficiary as per the DBT protocol through a National Electronic Fund Management System (Ne-FMS) for the States under Ne-FMS. Currently, 98.67% Fund Transfer Orders (FTOs) are getting generated within statutory period of 15 days.

The recommendation of the Hon'ble committee has been noted and appropriate follow up action will be taken to ensure 100% timely payment of wages."

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.20 The Committee note that the Ministry is taking various steps to ensure timely payment of wages to workers under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS through intensive consultation with state Governments and other stake holders. The Committee appreciate the Ministry's approach however the Aadhar Based

Payment Bridge System (APBS) in its current form has led to many job deletions and therefore instances of wage delays are found/being reported from across the States all over the country. The Committee thus reiterate this recommendation that the process of payment of wages be streamlined and a robust mechanism be put in place to ensure that the MGNREGA beneficiaries do not suffer on account of delay in payment of wages.

VI. Aadhar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS)

(Recommendation Serial No. 10)

1.21 In the connection of Aadhar Based Payment Bridge System, the Committee had made the following recommendation:-

“The Committee appreciate the efforts being undertaken by the DoRD in switching to completely Aadhar Based Payment System for the beneficiaries under MGNREGA. The aim to bring in greater transparency and reduce misappropriation of funds through the usage of technology is a welcome step and perhaps the need of the hour. There have been reported cases of non-seeding of Aadhar numbers of all the active job card holders, primarily due to pending cases of NPCI mapping. As on 21.11.2023, 14.12% of total job card holders are not Aadhar enabled under MGNREGA. Moving over the technical aspect, there are practical constraints being faced by MGNREGA beneficiaries such as non-working of their Aadhar numbers, KYC compliance, ignorance about the linkage of Aadhar with their bank account etc. One should always remember that the target community of MGNREGA are mainly less educated, technologically challenged and having less fiscal management know-how. Therefore, the Committee feel that any mechanism to be activated needs to take care of all the mushrooming challenges and till the time all the major bottlenecks associated with Aadhar Based Payment Bridge System are not tackled sufficiently, including creation of awareness among the MGNREGA beneficiaries, the system should not be made mandatory. Alternative mechanism should always operate side by side to ensure that the primary goal of MGNREGA to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology. Hence, the Committee recommend to DoRD to strike a fine balance between the usage of technology for payment and ironing out the flaws associated with it, while ensuring that wages are paid timely to MGNREGA workers and they are not mandated with Aadhar compliance till the mechanism is made foolproof.

1.22 In regard to the above recommendation, the DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as below:-

“Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS) is a method of disbursing payment to Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers using their unique 12 digit Aadhaar number as their financial address. It uses Aadhaar numbers to link a beneficiary's bank account with job cards, aiming to ensure faster, safer wage disbursement and reduce fraud. All worker under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme are to receive their wages through an Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS).

Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, beneficiaries are getting wage payment for unskilled manual work, directly into the Bank/Post office account as provided by the beneficiary. The wage payment is routed through Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS). After detailed consultation with all States/UTs ABPS has been made mandatory since 1st January, 2024. As on date out of total of 13.02 crore active workers, 98.85% active workers Aadhaar has been seeded.

As per NREGASoft, in April 2024 more than 96% Mahatma Gandhi NREGS beneficiaries received their wages securely through Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS). It may be noted that ABPS helps in timely payment of beneficiaries even in cases of frequent change of Bank account change in beneficiaries.

In case States/UTs face any kind of issues or problems in respect of Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge Systems the same are resolved on a priority basis. Ministry also organizes training programme frequently for functionaries of States/ UTs involved in implementation of ABPS.

Further, it is to mention that the Ministry arranges trainings as and when required by the States/UTs to keep updated with the process of Aadhaar seeding.”

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.23 The Committee note that after detailed consultation with all the States/UTs Aadhar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS) has been made mandatory since 1.1.2024 and as on 12.06.2024 out of total of 13.02 crore active workers, 98.85% Aadhar of active workers have been seeded. According to the Ministry any issues or problems in the APBS are resolved on a priority basis. While accepting the gains of APBS, the Committee is of the view that it

is too early to make it mandatory as the problems relating to Aadhar seeding still have not been resolved leading to exclusion of Lakhs of workers. The Committee therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that APBS should not be made mandatory and alternative mechanism should always operate side by side to ensure that the primary goal of MGNREGA to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology.

**VII. National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS)
(Recommendation Serial No. 11)**

1.24 With regard to the National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS), the Committee had made the following recommendation:-

“One of the other major initiative undertaken by DoRD to usher in greater transparency and accountability with the aid of technology is the usage of National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) app for capturing of attendance at work site. The Committee note that from 1st January, 2023 onwards, the workers under MGNREGA are supposed to capture their Geotagged two time stamped photographs in a day for marking their attendance. On the basis of the uploading of photographs, the attendance is counted and Muster rolls are accordingly generated. Although much water has flown under the bridge by now since the initiation of this mechanism, still there are few teething issues which remain to be addressed due to which workers on ground are facing obstacles in marking their attendance resulting in non-payment for the work actually done by them. The Committee have been enlightened on different occasions through credible sources and also through the insight gained from the study visits to different parts of the country that NMMS app, though a right step in eradicating malpractices to certain extent, still has a long way to go in terms of its execution. The reliability of MGNREGA beneficiaries on other persons with smart phones once again brings in the involvement and dependence upon a third party. Beneficiaries from various corners of the country have still expressed their inability to mark attendance on account of non-availability of smart phones, internet connectivity issues, boundation to remain at the site even after the work is completed for marking attendance to name a few. The Committee, once again are of the view that technology should always smoothen the passage and not turn out to be a dampener when its use is made mandatory. The larger intent of MGNREGA should always be achieved in terms of rural-employment and till the time all the stakeholders, in this case, the MGNREGA beneficiaries, are not brought on board and acquainted with the usage, some other alternative should also remain

in position for marking the attendance. So, the Committee recommend that DoRD should create awareness and provide facilities to the MGNREGA beneficiaries to get them acclimatized with the usage of the NMMS App while keeping in vogue a robust alternative mechanism also till that time.”

1.25 In regard to the above recommendation, the DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as below:-

“To ensure more transparency in the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the States/UTs, capturing of attendance with geo-tagged, two time-stamped photographs of the workers in a day through National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) App for all the works (except individual beneficiary works) has been made mandatory from 1st January, 2023.

This increases citizen oversight of the Scheme besides enabling faster processing of payments. Worksite supervisors are responsible for capturing attendance along with geo-tagged photographs of the workers through the NMMS App.

Ministry has arranged various workshop at a regular interval to pursue hand holding support to the States/UTs. The technical issues being faced in NMMS App are taken up with National Informatics Centre (NIC), Rural Development on a real-time basis. The new provisions/ suggestions requested by the States/UTs are being incorporated. All the issues concerning the NMMS app are reviewed and resolved from time to time. Training have been scheduled by the Ministry whenever required by the States/UTs to keep updated with the usage of NMMS app.

NMMS app has been modified to capture the second photograph just after 4 hours of uploading the attendance and first photograph. The morning attendance along with the first photograph and second photograph can be captured in offline mode and to be uploaded once the device comes into a network. In case of exceptional circumstances due to which attendance could not be uploaded, the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) has been authorized to upload the manual attendance.

Regarding availability of the Smart phone, it may be mentioned that there is a widespread availability of smartphones in the rural areas. As per Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2021 of ASER Centre, which reported that 67.7% surveyed rural households have at least one smartphone. Similar data has been reported by other agencies. Further, these smart phones required by only one person of the GP, preferably by the GraminRozgarSevak (GRS) and is not needed by every worker.

Further, it is to mention that the Government is actively engaged with the State Government in establishing systems that ensure provision of work as per demand. To generate awareness about the provisions of the Scheme and to provide adequate employment opportunities to rural households under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, all States/UTs have been requested to (i) initiate appropriate Information Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns including wall paintings for wide dissemination of the provisions of the Act, (ii) expand scope and coverage of demand registration system to ensure that demand for work under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS does not go unregistered, (iii) prepare plans in a participatory mode and get them approved in the Gram Sabha.

It is also submitted that no decline in generation of PD has been observed due to introduction of NMMS. Against generation of 293.7 crore PD in FY 2022-23, 309.07 crore PD has been generated in FY 2023-24 which shows that there is no adverse on PD generation due to NMMS. It is also submitted that a new system has since stabilized.

The recommendation given by Hon'ble Committee regarding creation of awareness among Mahatma Gandhi NREGS beneficiaries on use of NMMS has been noted."

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.26 National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) app is a mobile and internet based platform. Due to non-availability of smart phones, irregular power supply and lack of proper internet connectivity in various areas, the attendance of many MGNREGA workers is not getting recorded by the App. This is leading to a delay in the payment of the wages. The Committee, therefore, opine that NMMS app, though a right step in eradicating irregularities to certain extent, still has a long way to go in terms of its execution. The Committee, are of the view that technology has to be smooth and appropriate and the burden on the worker should be less or minimal. So, the Committee reiterate their recommendation that DoRD should create awareness and provide adequate facilities to the MGNREGA beneficiaries to get them acquainted with the usage of the NMMS along with some other alternative should also remain in place for marking the attendance.

VIII. Increase in number of days of work

Recommendation (Serial No. 13)

1.27 With regard to increase in number of days of work, the Committee had recommended as under:-

“The Committee find that the number of permissible works under MGNREGA has increased to 266. Also, the RE sought by DoRD for the ongoing Financial Year 2023-24 is Rs.1,10,000 crore. These aspects only strengthen the opinion that demand for work under MGNREGA has not diminished. Hence, the Committee find the demand from various quarters for raising the guaranteed number of days of work under MGNREGA from 100 to possibly 150 merits due weightage. The rationale behind such demand stems from the fact that the population of the country has been rising since the inception of MGNREGA in 2006 and so has the ambit of works under MGNREGA. By tweaking the nature of works and carrying out suitable convergence of MGNREGA with other schemes of Central/State, the expenditure on labour force required for various projects can be better channelized and utilised. Dovetailing of labour oriented projects such as PMGSY, PMAY-G with MGNREGA can only be a win-win situation. On this premise, the Committee opine that the scale of MGNREGA can be fine tuned by utilizing its labour force through proper mechanism. Increasing the guaranteed number of days shall act as an incentive to work under MGNREGA. Thus, the Committee recommend to DoRD to look into the issue with practical approach and undertake a study for reviewing the need and justifications for increasing the number of guaranteed days of work under MGNREGA from present 100 days to 150 days and necessary action may be taken according to the outcome of the study.”

1.28 The DoRD in their action taken reply have stated as follows:-

“The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, is an Act to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in **rural areas of the country** by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The Ministry mandates the provision of additional 50 days of wage employment (beyond the stipulated 100 days) to every Scheduled Tribe Household in a forest area, provided that these households have no other private property except for the land rights provided under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006.

In addition to this, there is a provision for up to additional 50 days of wage employment in a financial year in drought/natural calamity affected notified rural areas.

As per Section 3 (4) of the Act, the State Governments may make provision for providing additional days of employment beyond the period guaranteed under the Act from their own funds

Details of National average days of employment provided per households under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in the last five financial years 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 2023-24 are given below.

Financial Year	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
National average days of employment availed per households	52.09	47.83	50.07	51.52	48.4

Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, the average days of employment per household in each financial year in the last five financial years has remained around 50 days. Therefore, the Ministry is emphasizing generating awareness about the provisions of the Scheme and to provide adequate employment opportunities to rural households under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.”

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.29 The Committee note the demand from various quarters regarding the hike in the number of days of work sought under MGNREGA from 100 to 150 days. The rationale behind such demand stems from the rising population of the country since the inception of MGNREGA and so has the ambit of permissible works under MGNREGA. MGNREGA emerged as a last ray of hope for the poor rural masses in the unprecedented challenging times witnessed by all of us especially during the COVID pandemic. DoRD in their reply have stated about the provision of 100 days of guaranteed wage employment under MGNREGA and that under Section 3(A) of the Act, State Governments are allowed to make provision for additional days of employment beyond the guaranteed period from their own funds. The Committee find the reply routine and generic in nature, merely highlighting the formulated provisions of the Act. Although the State Governments may make provisions for additional days, still the Committee are of the firm opinion that the mandatory increase in number of guaranteed days should be brought about by the DoRD by moving an amendment in the Act in order to make it applicable for the entire country, so that the demand of needy beneficiaries may not

hinge upon the arbitrariness of the State Governments. Therefore, the Committee reiterate their recommendation for increase in number of days of work sought under MGNREGA from 100 to 150 days and implore upon DoRD to take up the matter in right earnest.

IX. Separate Job Card for Differently Abled person in the family

Recommendation (Serial No. 14)

1.30 Regarding the issue of Separate Job Card for Differently Abled person in the family, the Committee had recommended as under:-

“A very important suggestion which came before the Committee was that of issuance of a separate job card for a differently abled person in a household. The Committee were briefed about the need and importance of a separate job card to cater to the livelihood of a differently abled person. Normally, one job card is issued to a willing worker from a household. However, there are cases, wherein a family also comprises of a differently abled person, who can also undertake work under MGNREGA. Keeping in view that the range of MGNREGA works has diversified in much larger way and there is a hope of providing employment to differently abled persons according to their abilities. The plight and prayers of a differently abled person to live an esteemed life is oblivious to no one. The welfare nature of MGNREGA Scheme will perhaps not require much breaking away from the mould to open up its domain to also include the differently abled persons of the rural areas as a separate entity. This provisioning shall go a long way in empowering our disabled section of the population who have all the rights and wherewithal to compete and live life on equal terms with others. Therefore, the Committee implore upon the DoRD to take up this recommendation on humane grounds and make the scheme under MGNREGA ‘Disabled Friendly’ by providing them a separate Right to work and live with their heads high.”

1.31 The DoRD in their action taken reply furnished to the Committee have stated as follows:-

“Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is very inclusive and ensures equal opportunities for all rural workers, including differently-abled persons.

As per Schedule-II of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, 2005 the adult member of every household residing in any rural area and willing to do unskilled manual work may submit the names, age and the address of the household to the Gram Panchayat at the village level, in whose jurisdiction they reside, for registration of their household for

issuance of a job card. **If the job seeker is a single woman or disabled person or aged person or released bonded labour or belonging to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, they must be given a special job card of a distinct colour** which will ensure them a special protection in providing work, work evaluation and work as site facilitates, as the case may be.

The provisions for differently abled persons under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Operational Guidelines are given as under:-

Para 9.3.1: The disabled or differently abled persons defined under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (1 of 1996) as persons with disabilities, the severity of which is 40% and above would be considered as special category of vulnerable persons for the purposes of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. The disabled persons as defined in the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (44 of 1999) are also to be considered as disabled for the purpose of inclusion in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Para 9.3.2: Since this category of people are differently abled, special conditions have to be created to facilitate their inclusion in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Para 9.3.3: Each State Government will identify specific works, which can be done by the disabled and vulnerable persons. In a village, different categories of persons with disabilities will be organized to come together as a fixed group to accomplish the works proposed for them under the Scheme, in a way that makes it possible for them to exercise their choice. On no grounds, should the disabled and vulnerable persons be paid lower wages as compared to other persons employed in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA works.

Here it is also submitted that Ministry has already formulated and notified the Accessibility guidelines for the persons with disability for all the schemes being administered by this Ministry. State/UTs have been advised to implement these guidelines in the works under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.”

Further Observations/Comments of the Committee

1.32 The Committee were briefed about the need and importance of a separate job card to cater to the livelihood of a differently abled person. Considering their vulnerability, physical and mental condition, there is a need to provide a conducive work environment by discounting of work norms to

attract them into MGNREGA. Such an action will help the disabled persons to realise their potential and encourage them to join the workforce and contribute their bit in the nation building. It has been also found that their treatment at worksites was not totally free from all sorts of prejudices towards differently abled person. The Committee, therefore, strongly urge the DoRD to strictly monitor and strengthen all its monitoring mechanism for proper implementation of guidelines in States/UTs for disabled persons under MGNREGA. And that not only those who implement the scheme but the co-workers and society at large need to be sensitised to overcome the problem faced by the disabled persons.

CHAPTER II

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation (Serial No. 1)

2.1 The Committee note that MGNREG Scheme is a marquee scheme of the Government of India which is administered and supervised under the aegis of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) by the Department of Rural Development (DoRD). Since the inception of MGNREG Scheme through the MGNREG Act in 2005 and its complete coverage of the country's rural landscape by 2008, the scheme has been a flag bearer of the Right based rural employment framework. The testimony to its worth has been vindicated by the submissions of the DoRD wherein its role in providing succour to the rural populace in times of distress and reverse migration during Covid mayhem has been duly acknowledged. In this context, budgetary allocation to MGNREGA for the financial year 2023-24 seems to be inadequate to cover all the expenditure bases of a scheme of such magnitude. Rs.60,000/- Crore has been allocated to MGNREGA Scheme at BE stage against the proposed demand of Rs.98,000/- Crore made by the Department of Rural Development (DoRD) for the Financial Year 2023-24. While BE for the Financial Year 2022-23 was Rs. 73,000/- Crore for MGNREGA Scheme, which got increased to Rs. 89,400/- Crore at the RE stage. The reduction in budgetary allocation under the scheme for the current financial year is puzzling and needs to be looked into. In this regard, the Committee agree with the contention of DoRD that MGNREG Scheme is a demand driven scheme and the budgetary resources for it can be replenished on need-basis. However, the pruning of funds at BE stage itself does have a cascading effect on various important aspects such as timely release of wages, release of material share etc. which have a telling impact on the progress of the Scheme. The Committee feel that for smooth implementation of MGNREGA at ground level, shortage of fund is a big obstacle which does not augur well for the performance of the scheme. In view of the foregoing, the Committee recommend that DoRD should look into the issue of shortage of funds under MGNREGA pragmatically and seek requisite increase in the funds through proper demands from the Ministry of Finance for the effective implementation of the scheme. Moreover, the

MoRD should also try to convince the Ministry of Finance to allocate budgetary grant to MGNREGA based on its expenditure pattern of previous years.

Reply of the Government

2.2 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a demand-driven wage employment scheme. Funds release to States/UTs is a continuous process and Central Government is committed to making funds available to States/UTs for the implementation of the Scheme as per the demand for work on the ground.

The financial allocation under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS for financial year 2023-24 was Rs. 60,000 crore at Budget Estimate (BE) stage, which was enhanced to 89,400 crore at Final Estimate (FE) stage.

For financial year 2024-25, budget allocation of Rs. 86,000 crores for Mahatma Gandhi NREGS has been provided, which is the highest ever allocation under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS at BE stage.

The Ministry seeks additional funds for the scheme from the Ministry of Finance as and when required for meeting the demand for work on the ground.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Recommendation (Serial No. 7)

2.3 The Committee came across a suggestion during examination of the subject that the issue of physical slips to the MGNREGA beneficiaries may be very practical and user friendly. It is an agreeable fact that much of the information can be accessed through Janmanrega app, but still the Committee feel that the end line consumers of this scheme are the labourers from rural background, not yet efficient in handling even smart phones and apps. Issuance of a physical pay slip denoting their details like number of days worked, amount to be paid, amount due till date will perhaps prove to be a greater sense of security for the psyche of MGNREGA labourers. Thus, the Committee recommend that DoRD should explore the feasibility of issuance of a physical pay slip enumerating the requisite details to the MGNREGA beneficiaries on completion of their work and the closure of Muster roll.

Reply of the Government

2.4 In addition to provision for issuance of wage slips through NREGAssoft to the beneficiary at block level/Gram Panchayat level there is provision for issuance of

physical Job card to each rural household willing to do unskilled work under the scheme. In the Job card there is specific provisions for entering information on date wise amount of wages paid. Further, as a part of transparency and accountability measures ministry has developed JANMANREGA app. This app plays a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS by promoting transparency, accountability, and empowerment among beneficiaries. It serves as a valuable tool for both beneficiaries and authorities involved in the implementation of the scheme.

The Janmanrega App is a citizen-centric mobile application; its key features are as follows:

Give Feedback: Citizens can provide feedback on assets within the radius of 20 meters of the geotagged location of the asset. Additionally, workers can raise concerns related to work allocation, work demand, payment, etc. The app automatically forwards user-raised issues to the concerned officials at the block, district, and state levels for prompt resolution.

Know Worker's Attendance/Payments: Workers can check information about their payment status, work attendance, ABPS status, and job-card details by entering the job-card number.

Nearby Assets: Users can locate details of assets based on their live Global Positioning System (GPS) location and specific attributes.

The app is available in Hindi, English, as well as 10 regional languages (Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu).

For accessing the information available in Janmanrega App, the Gram RojgarSahayak (GRS) under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS will ensure awareness of various features of the Janmanrega App to all the stakeholders at the Gram Panchayat. Therefore, the beneficiaries/stakeholder who are unable to access the information from Janmanrega App may take help of GRS.

Also, the banks send a SMS alert regarding the payments credited to the account of the beneficiary.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Recommendation (Serial No. 8)

2.5 The Committee note that Section 7(1) of the MGNREGA Act, 2005 unambiguously outlines the terms and conditions for payment of unemployment allowance to the applicants who are not provided employment within fifteen days of the receipt of their applications seeking employment. The daily unemployment allowance will be at a rate not less than one fourth of the wage rate for the first thirty days during the financial year and not less than one half of the wage rate for the remaining period of the financial year. The State Governments are liable to provide

unemployment allowance subject to terms and conditions prescribed by them and as per their economic capacity. State Governments also need to make necessary budgetary provision for the payment of unemployment allowance. Perusal of State/UT-wise details of beneficiaries eligible for unemployment allowance and the beneficiaries who were paid unemployment allowance shows that some States/UTs have not provided unemployment allowance during the period from 2018 to 2023. Since it is necessary to provide unemployment allowance to those beneficiaries who were not provided employment, the Committee recommend that DoRD should ensure all possible measures including taking up the matter at the highest level with the concerned States/UTs so that the State Governments do not fail in their statutory duties to provide the unemployment allowance to the MGNREGA beneficiaries.

Reply of the Government

2.6 Section 7(1), Mahatma Gandhi NREGA: *“If an applicant for employment under the Scheme is not provided such employment within fifteen days of receipt of his application seeking employment or from the date on which the employment has been sought in the case of an advance application, whichever is later, he shall be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance in accordance with this section.”*

The daily unemployment allowance will be at a rate not less than one fourth of the wage rate for the first thirty days during the financial year and not less than one half of the wage rate for the remaining period of the financial year.

The responsibility of implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is vested with the Government of States/UTs. The Ministry has a comprehensive system of monitoring and review mechanism for Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. The Ministry regularly reviews the performance of the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in States/UTs through various fora viz., Mid-Term Review, Labour Budget meetings, Labour Budget Revision meetings, Programme Review meetings. Central Employment Guarantee Council and State Employment Guarantee Councils periodically monitor implementation of the programme.

So far, Unemployment Allowance rule have been notified by 25 States/UTs under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.

The recommendation given by Hon’ble committee has been noted and it will be strictly followed up with all the States/UTs.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Recommendation (Serial No. 9)

2.7 The Committee note that the timely payment of delay compensation is another grey area in the implementation of the MGNREG scheme under the Act.

Beneficiaries under MGNREGA are entitled to receive payment of compensation for the delay, at the rate of 0.05% of the unpaid wages per day of delay beyond the sixteenth day of the closure of Muster roll. During the course of examination of the subject, the Committee found that during the Financial Year 2022-23, Rs.93,82,436/- was approved amount but Rs.59,39,191/- was the paid amount under delay compensation. During the ongoing Financial Year 2023-24, as on 21.11.2023, Rs. 24,31,869/- is the approved amount, but only Rs.2,50,343/- has been paid so far under delay compensation. These figures themselves indicate the concerns raised by the MGNREGA beneficiaries who not only suffer from the delay in the payment of wages but are also bereft of their statutory solace in terms of payment of delay compensation. MGNREGA scheme is the brainchild of the Central Government and has been a pioneer social welfare scheme aimed at the upliftment of rural population who have no other work for livelihood. The scheme derives its authority from the statutory wordings of the Act notified in 2005. Being an Act of Parliament, the DoRD is its custodian and compliance of all the provisions by the executing agencies needs to be strictly monitored and reviewed upon on regular basis. In wake of such existing gap between the provisions in the Act and its actual implementation on the ground level, the Committee recommend DoRD to engage in active communication with all the departments/governing bodies of the States/UTs for ensuring timely and stricter compliance with the payment of delay compensation to the suffering beneficiaries under MGNREGA.

Reply of the Government

2.8 As per the provisions mentioned in Schedule-II of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, wage seekers shall be entitled to receive payment of compensation for the delay, at the rate of 0.05% of the unpaid wages per day of delay beyond the sixteenth day of closure of muster roll.

Any delay in payment of compensation beyond a period of fifteen days from the date it becomes payable shall be considered in the same manner as the delay in payment of wages.

The State Government shall pay the compensation upfront after due verification within the time limits specified above and recover the compensation amount from the functionaries or agencies responsible for the delay in payment.

The government of India has taken various steps to ensure timely payment of delayed compensation to the suffering beneficiaries under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. The important elements of the above framework are listed below:

The Ministry regularly reviews the performance of the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in States/UTs through various fora viz., Mid-Term Review, Labour Budget determination and Labour Budget revision meetings, and Programme Review meetings. Central Employment Guarantee Council and State Employment Guarantee Councils also periodically monitor the implementation of the Scheme.

Steps have been taken to strengthen transparency and accountability which include geo-tagging of assets, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), National electronic Fund Management System (NeFMS), Aadhar Based Payment System (ABPS), Software for Estimate Calculation using rural rates for Employment (SECURE) and appointment of Ombudsperson in every district of States/UTs.

In order to ensure a higher level of monitoring and oversight, National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) App and Area Officer App have been introduced. In the former, attendance of workers on all work sites (except individual beneficiary works) is taken daily along with a geo-tagged & time-stamped photograph of theirs. The latter has been designed to ensure that field officials conduct inspections in the requisite numbers and look into all the relevant aspects of the scheme.

So far, Delay Compensation rule have been notified by 26 States/UTs under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.

The recommendation given by Hon'ble committee has been noted and it will be strictly followed up with all the States/UTs.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Recommendation (Serial No. 12)

2.9 The Committee have been witnessing since the inception of the scheme under MGNREGA, one major calamitous factor, that despite good efforts of the DoRD, remains as a thorn in the implementations of the scheme being that of the prevalence of fake job cards. This is a major reason for irregularity in the implementation of scheme, which deprives the genuine beneficiaries from their dues, and acts as a tool for diverting funds. Experts and people in the know-how of things associated with MGNREGA along with the experience of Members have brought this issue before the Committee on numerous occasions. The Committee also note that Section 25 of the Act states that contravention of the provision of the Act shall on conviction attract a fine which may extend to one thousand rupees. In-arguably, several provisions for proper implementation have been provided in the Act. However inspite of the presence of such provisions, the open secret of fake job cards afflicting the schemes' intent is a major cause for concern. DoRD have been consistently endeavouring to streamline and bring greater transparency in the

execution of MGNREGA at ground level which has not gone unnoticed. However, still rogue actors at ground level devise means to bypass the system and through their shrewd connivance with similar mindset characters flourish in their wrongful acts. The Committee after their deliberations recommend DoRD that a holistic review of the mechanism surrounding the issue of job cards be undertaken to weed out the glaring loopholes with the correct usage of technology. This may be done through use of smart cards or biometric cards, anything which the DoRD may find practical and robust enough not to be forged or duplicated. Moreover, penal provisions in the Act may also be augmented by seeking proper amendments and stricter monitoring may be ensured.

Reply of the Government

2.10 The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) acknowledges the Hon'ble Committee's continued attention to the critical issue of fraudulent job cards within the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (Mahatma Gandhi NREGS).

It is submitted that implementation of the Scheme is the responsibility of State Governments and several provisions for proper implementation have been provided in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA), 2005.

Verification of Job Cards is a regular exercise conducted by the States/UTs. It is the responsibility of the District Programme Coordinator in the State and the UT Government to ensure that these verification campaigns are conducted in a time bound manner. In all cases, the Programme Officer, after independent verification of the facts, may direct the Gram Panchayat to cancel the Job Card.

The Job Cards can be cancelled/deleted, after due verification, only if, it is a fake job card (incorrect job card)/ duplicate job card/ household not willing to work/ family shifted from Gram Panchayat permanently/ single person in job card and that person is expired.

All additions / deletions / cancellations must be made public, presented to the Gram Sabha / Ward Sabha, reported to the Programme Officer and updated in the NREGASoft.

As per NREGASoft, during the FY 2023-24, total number of Job cards deleted including fake Job cards by the States/UTs was 1.03 crore.

This Ministry is actively pursuing a multi-pronged approach to address this challenge:

Technological Solutions: MoRD intend to implement face authentication version in NMMS App at the field level. This will help in preventing cases of forgery and

duplication of job cards as only genuine beneficiaries will be able to mark their attendance through NMMS App.

Robust Monitoring Mechanisms: MoRD remains committed to implementing stricter monitoring procedures at all levels of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS implementation. This enhanced vigilance will ensure greater transparency, enable the timely detection of irregularities, and ultimately safeguard the scheme's resources for genuine beneficiaries.

Aadhaar seeding of beneficiary: Aadhaar seeding of beneficiary is a continuous process and is done as a de-duplication exercise to authenticate the genuine beneficiaries, to make the benefits of the social welfare schemes available only to the genuine beneficiaries. As on date, 12.87 Crores active workers Aadhaar have been seeded in MIS out of 13.02 Crores active workers.

The recommendation given by Hon'ble committee has been noted and it will be strictly followed up with all the States/UTs.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Recommendation (Serial No. 15)

2.11 The Committee find Section 17 of the MGNREGA Act, 2005 as a unique tool of check and balance in the implementation of the scheme at ground level. One of the best mechanism that is already ingrained in the statute itself perhaps reveal the intent to keep the scheme under a tight leash of monitoring. Section 17(2) of the Act mandates that the Gram Sabha shall conduct regular social audits of all the projects under the scheme taken up within the Gram Panchayat. The Committee further find that during the current financial year, as on 20.11.2023, only 32.19% of the 2,56,254 Gram Panchayats planned for audit at least once in a financial year had been audited. During 2022-23, 69.48% of the planned 2,39,265 GPs, 51.78% of 2,04,608 of the planned GPs in 2021-22 and only 14.02% of the 79,312 planned GPs in 2020-21 were audited at least once in the Financial Year. The figures themselves reveal the sorry state of affairs in this regard. Needless to say that Section 17 of the Act is not being complied with in letter and spirit for various reasons. It has been revealed that the State of Goa, UTs of Ladakh, Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Puducherry, the Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu are yet to establish a Social Audit Unit in the State/UT to facilitate conducting of social audits by the Gram Sabha. Thus, setting up of a Social Audit Unit is a pre-requisite which needs to be mandatorily done. The Committee feel that such an important aspect of the scheme should not remain neglected/non-complied with at the grass root level. Conducting of

timely social audits not only ensures the transparency in expenditure of funds at the Gram Panchayat level but is also a tool to recover the misappropriated funds reported after audit. The reports of social audits in public domain would only work to augment the confidence of the MGNREGA beneficiaries in the scheme. Moreover, it is also utmost necessary to bring within the ambit the other agencies also who are entrusted with carrying out MGNREGA works other than through GPs. Therefore, the Committee recommend the DoRD to ensure the independent establishment and functioning of Social Audit Units in each State/UT to carry out the mandatory social audits under MGNREGA as per the Act while publishing their audit reports in public domain. Efforts should also be taken to bring the other agencies also under the ambit of social audit. If necessary, necessary amendments to MGNREG Act may be considered for incorporating penal provisions in case non-auditing of MGNREGA accounts.

Reply of the Government

2.12 The independent Social Audit Units have been established in 27 States and in 1 UT. The State of Goa, UT of Ladakh, Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Puducherry and The Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu are yet to establish a Social Audit Unit (SAU) to facilitate the conduct of Social Audit by Gram Sabha. These States/UTs are directed in various review meetings to establish the Social Audit Unit for the smooth conduct of Social Audits in Gram Panchayat.

As on 31.03.2024, out of total 2.69 lakhs Gram Panchayats, Social audit has been completed for more than 2 lakhs Gram Panchayats. States/UTs-wise details of Social Audit Conducted under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme are given at **Annexure**.

Also, a **Joint Task Force on Streamlining Social Audit** has been formed under the chairpersonship Additional Deputy Controller and Auditor General (Local Governance Audit) on the following ToR:

- a. Modifying the current Auditing Standards of Social Audit so that it can be applicable to programmes of multiple Departments and Ministries mandating social audits. The task force may examine whether social audit can now be broad-based to cover the entire gamut of activities for the delivery of services and benefits at the grassroots level, not necessarily linked to individual schemes/funding sources.
- b. Developing norms for ensuring the financial, administrative and functional independence and autonomy of the Social Audit Units across the implementing Department/ Ministry.
- c. Defining norms of fund allocation and fund releases to Social Audit Units.
- d. Building minimum standards of training and capacity building of Social Audit Unit Resource Persons.

- e. Defining an inter-departmental administrative mechanism for reviewing social audits and action taken on social audit findings on a period basis, and its reporting to the Legislature and the C&AG.

As per information uploaded by the States/UTs in NREGASoft an amount of Rs. 197.60 crore have been recovered since inception based on misappropriation reported by Social Audit team under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.

Act mandates that Social Audit is to be conducted at least once in every six months. The performance of the Social Audit Unit of States/UTs is regularly monitored in various review meetings like Mid-term Review (MTR), Performance Review Committee (PRC), Common Review Mission (CRM) and Labour budget revision meetings and before Empowered Committee. In addition to this, the performance of social audit is also one of the agenda during the Central team visits to States/UTs and National Level Monitors (NLM) and necessary instructions are issued from time to time.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Recommendation (Serial No. 16)

2.13 The Committee further note that as per the provision under the MGNREGA Act, 2005, out of the States' entitlement of 6% towards administrative expenditure, up to 0.5% shall be earmarked for the State's social audit. However, it has been widely reported and also brought to the notice of the Committee that one of the reasons being cited for non-timely conduct of social audits in the States/UTs is that of non-release of earmarked funds. Due to paucity of funds, the Social Audit Units are not able to manage their operational costs leading to non-implementation of a mandatory provision in the Act, that of Conduct of Social Audit. From the details of the current financial year, the Committee observe that 1st Tranche of fund release (1st instalment) has been released for 15 States while fund release 1st tranche (1st& 2nd instalment) has been released to 3 States only. From few States, proposals are yet to be received while some have sent incomplete proposals. The situation aptly reflects that there exists some administrative/bureaucratic impediment due to which either procedural formalities are not being taken care of seriously at the State/UT level or there exists unexplained glitches in overseeing the set up and conduct of smooth social audit units. The Committee therefore feel that DoRD should look into this glaring aspect with alacrity and rectify the anomalies that might have crept in the implementation of such an important component of the scheme for want of timely release of funds. Hence, the Committee recommend the DoRD to ensure that the

provision of social audit is implemented in totality and does not suffer due to lack of funds.

Reply of the Government

2.14 Funds release to SAUs is a continuous process and Central Government is committed to making funds available to SAUs in time for the smooth conduct of social audits. Fund is released to SAUs on submission of proposal in the prescribed format by the SAU and subject to fulfilment of the prescribed conditions. The proposal can be submitted after a SAU has utilized 75 per cent of the total available funds as per the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Finance.

Social Audit Units have been established in total of 27 States/1 UT. Owing to consistent perusals with the State/UT government funds have been released to 23 States/UT in FY 2023-24 from whom complete proposals were received.

The recommendation given by Hon'ble committee has been noted and all efforts will be made to ensure timely release of funds to the Social Audit Units (SAUs)

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Recommendation (Serial No. 17)

2.15 The Committee are of the opinion that MGNREG Scheme is such a large scheme in terms of its geographical coverage and paraphernalia involved in its implementation that there cannot be any escape from the reporting of grievances by the beneficiaries at some or the other level. Thus, it becomes imperative that the Section 19 of the MGNREGA Act, 2005, which entails that the State Government shall, by rules, determine appropriate grievance redressal mechanisms at the Block and the District level for dealing with any complaint by any person in respect of implementation of the scheme and lay down the procedure for disposal of such complaints, is followed scrupulously without any laxity. In this regard, the Committee note that a complaint register is needed to be maintained at Gram Panchayat level. Moreover, Para 30 of the Schedule I of the MGNREGA Act also mandates the appointment of Ombudsman for each district to look into the grievances, enquire and post awards. There are still districts having no Ombudsman. The Committee appreciate the provision of Online Central Portal Grievance Redressal Mechanism System (CPGRAMS) of the Ministry. However, looking at the target population of MGNREGA beneficiaries, the Committee are still of the view that physical setups for hearing one to one grievances of the MGNREGA beneficiaries will serve much better for the technologically challenged MGNREGA beneficiaries. Thus, the Committee recommend to DoRD to create awareness for the usage of CPGRAMS in a better

way while ensuring that there is stricter compliance of Section 19 of the Act and appropriate mechanism is set up at Gram Panchayat/Block/District levels along with mandatory presence of an Ombudsperson in each district. Moreover, DoRD should take steps for creating awareness among the rural population about the availability of complaint register at Gram Panchayat level and the existence of ombudsman in each district who can be approached in case of non-resolving of their complaints.

Reply of the Government

2.16 Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) is an online platform set up by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) to enable the citizens to lodge their grievances to the public authorities. Complaint can be lodged through CPGRAMS portal on any subject including the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.

State/UT –wise Pendency Status of complaints are reviewed by this Ministry from time to time in various forums such as Mid-term Review meetings, Performance Review Committee meetings and Annual Action Plan Meetings and during physical visits of Officers from Departments to States/UTs etc. Apart from CPGRAMS, under good governance initiatives, Complaint Register is also maintained at Gram Panchayat level to capture the complaints/grievances of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA beneficiaries.

Additionally, complainants can also lodge their grievances/complaints at Block, District, State and Central level directly through written letters, mails etc.

It is also mentioned that each State/UTs also has their own Grievance Redressal mechanism.

Status of appointment of ombudsperson is regularly reviewed with states/UTs. A total of 567 ombudsperson have been appointed out of total of 740 districts, across the States/UTs.

However, the recommendation of the Committee has been noted for further follow-up action.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Recommendation (Serial No. 18)

2.17 Strong monitoring mechanism is an essential requirement for the success of any scheme of the Government and to achieve the desired target. The Committee having deliberated upon the subject feel that MGNREGA is a welfare oriented scheme which has its intention at right places aimed at providing last recourse to the downtrodden masses of rural populace who look at it with the sense of hope and credence. No other scheme of rural poverty alleviation derives its strength from the

statutory provisions. Thus, it becomes all the more important that the scheme does not fare poorly for reasons of weak monitoring system. DoRD have elaborated upon the various steps being taken by them to ensure compliance, accountability and ushering in of greater transparency in the implementation of the scheme. However, the Committee also note that the implementing body of the Scheme are States/UTs and the GPs to be precise at the grass root level. In this context, the Committee expect DoRD to maintain and strengthen all its monitoring modules for sustained progress of the scheme in terms of achievement of its physical and financial targets. Whether it be the wrong usage of machinery instead of MGNREGA workers or the issue of fake job cards etc., there can be widespread instances associated with MGNREGA which require stricter surveillance and redressal. Therefore, the Committee recommend that DoRD should keep on reviewing and upgrading their monitoring mechanism of MGNREGA in such a way so that the scheme benefits its targeted beneficiaries with the right outcome.

Reply of the Government

2.18 The Ministry has a comprehensive system of monitoring and review mechanism for Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. Some of the important elements of the above framework are listed below:

- i. The Ministry regularly reviews the performance of the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in States/UTs through various fora viz., Mid-Term Review, Empowered Committee Meeting for Annual Action Plan Preparation, Labour Budget Revision meetings, and Programme Review meetings. Central Employment Guarantee Council and State Employment Guarantee Councils also periodically monitor the implementation of the Scheme.
- ii. National Level Monitors, Common Review Missions and Officers of the Ministry visit States/UTs at regular intervals to review the implementation of the scheme. After the field visits, the findings/shortcomings and recommendations are shared with the States/UTs for appropriate action at their end.
- iii. Auditing Standards for Social Audit have been issued and States/UTs have been advised to establish independent Social Audit Units, conduct Social Audit as per Audit of Scheme Rules, 2011 and training of village resource persons for conducting Social Audit etc. As per the Audit of the Scheme Rules, the audit of the works in a Gram Panchayat has been made mandatory. Internal Audit Teams of the Department also conduct regular audits.
- iv. Steps have been taken to strengthen transparency and accountability which include geo-tagging of assets, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), National electronic Fund Management System (NeFMS), Aadhar Based Payment System (ABPS), Software for Estimate Calculation using rural rates for

- Employment (SECURE) and appointment of Ombudsperson in every districts of States/UTs.
- v. Steps have been taken for establishment of State Technical Cell at various levels for qualitative monitoring and supervision of works under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.
 - vi. In order to ensure a higher level of monitoring and oversight, National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) App and Area Officer App have been introduced. In the former, attendance of workers on all work sites (except individual beneficiary works) is taken daily along with a geo-tagged & time-stamped photograph of theirs. The latter has been designed to ensure that field officials conduct inspections in the requisite numbers and look into all the relevant aspects of the scheme.
 - vii. Transparency and accountability measures like an Ombudsperson for each district, an independent Director for the Social Audit Unit, and timely compliance of Internal Audit Paras are some of the conditions for the funds release.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

CHAPTER III

**RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE
IN VIEW OF REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT**

NIL

(DoRD O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

Recommendation (Serial No. 2)

4.1 The Committee find that availability of funds is one major aspect affecting the financial health of the scheme while the other area of equal importance is the often complained matter associated with the delay in the release of funds to the States. Proper implementation of the scheme totally hinges on the timely and adequate release of funds to all the States/UTs. Now the permissible works under MGNREGA have been widened further to include Natural Resource Management (NRM) works and hence the ambit of works under MGNREGA is further increasing day by day. However, on perusal of the information provided, Committee find that there are wage and material liabilities in respect of many of the States and UTs. In this regard, the Committee note the submission of DoRD that fund release is a continuous process and timely compliance of conditions by States for fund release is the important requirement. If any State could not comply the conditions in a timeline, it leads to delay in release of funds. Further, it is noted that there are delays in material payment and DoRD is trying to devise systems whereby these delays are removed or minimized. In this regard, the Committee are of the view that whatever may be the reasons for non-release of funds, the sufferers remain the poor and down-trodden beneficiaries of MGNREGA. The Committee, therefore, call upon the DoRD to address the grey areas surrounding the timely release of funds under MGNREGA and spruce up their financial mechanisms for ensuring that obstacles in the path of seamless release of funds under MGNREGA are removed so that MGNREGA works/beneficiaries do not have to suffer. In this regard, the Committee recommend that DoRD should take up the matter of delays in compliance of conditions with every State and UT and ensure that the funds for both wage and material components are released to all States/UTs without any delays.

Reply of the Government

4.2 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a demand driven wage employment Scheme. Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, States/UTs furnish funds release proposals to the Government of India. The Ministry releases funds periodically in two tranches with each tranche consisting of one or

more instalments, keeping in view the “agreed to” Labour Budget, demand for works, opening balance, pace of utilization of funds, pending liabilities, overall performance and subject to submission of relevant documents by the States/UTs.

First instalment of the first tranche is released in the first half of April after adjusting unspent balance available with the States and considering the pending liabilities, if any. The second tranche is released on submission of proposal in the prescribed format by the State and subject to fulfilment of all the prescribed conditions. The proposal for release of 2nd tranche can be submitted by the State/UT after utilization of 75% of the total available funds. If the proposal for second tranche is submitted after 1st October, then the Audit Report and Audited Utilization Certificate (UC) of the previous financial year are also required. Quantum of funds to be released as part of second tranche depends upon the performance of the States/UTs and compliance with other conditions for fund release.

Fund release to States/UTs is a continuous process and Central Government is committed in making funds available to States/UTs for the implementation of the Scheme as per the demand for work on the ground.

A total of 6 crore households were provided employment resulting in generation of 312.55 crore person days during FY 2023-24 and release of an amount of Rs.89,351.65 crore.

This Ministry regularly interacts and follows up with States/UTs Government regarding timely submission of prescribed documents in order to avoid delay in release of funds for implementation of scheme.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.8 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 3)

4.3 The Committee note that Section 6 of the Act defines the wage rate and also provides that notwithstanding anything contained in the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Central Government, may by notification, specify the wage rate for the purposes of the Act which may be different for different areas. The provision further implies that the wages so notified shall not be less than the wages guaranteed under Minimum Wages Act for agricultural labourers. The Committee feel that the need for having a wage guaranteeing rural employment scheme of such a grand scale was emanated from the need of providing a sense of security in terms of employment and wage to the poor people in rural areas who does not have any other job avenue to look forward to. The Ministry notifies the wage rates under MGNREGA for each State/UT at the beginning of each financial year. After going through the notified

wage rates under MGNREGA over the period of years and during the ongoing financial year, the Committee find the range of wages to vary from as little as Rs.221/- in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Rs. 224/- in Arunachal Pradesh, Rs. 228/- in Bihar and Jharkhand to Rs. 354/- in the 3 Gram Panchayats of Sikkim (namely Gnathang, Lachung and Lachen), Rs. 328/- in Nicobar and Rs. 311/- in Andaman. Observing the quantum of wages since 2008, the Committee find the wages inadequate and not in consonance with the rising cost of living. At this juncture, the agricultural labourers and other labourers involved in masonry/miscellaneous works command a daily wage more than the wage guaranteed under MGNREGA. Perhaps, one of the reasons for the dearth of MGNREGA workers to be engaged in the works under MGNREGA, may be the insufficiency of the wage rates under MGNREGA. Workers would definitely engage themselves in such projects/works which could earn them a better remuneration. This is indeed an area of concern vis-à-vis the implementation of MGNREGA along with the fulfilment of noble objectives and the spirit behind the inception of such a social scheme. It has been also brought to the notice of the Committee that a Central Government Committee on minimum wages, AnoopSatpathy Committee had recommended that the wages under MGNREGA should be Rs.375/- per day. The need for suitable increase in the wages under MGNREGA has been felt and echoed from various quarters and also highlighted by this Committee in its earlier Reports. Therefore, the Committee once again recommend that DoRD should take a considered view on the pertinent issue of suitable increase in the wage rates under MGNREGA and increase the wage rates at the earliest for benefitting MGNREGA beneficiaries in a befitting manner.

Reply of the Government

4.4 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a demand driven wage employment Scheme. **It provides fall back options for livelihood security for the rural households, when no better employment opportunity is available.**

As per Section 6 (1) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA), 2005, the Central Government may by notification specify the wage rate for its beneficiaries. Further, section 6 (2) of the Act, provide that until such time as a wage rate is fixed by the Central Government in respect of any area in a State, the minimum wage fixed by the State Government under section 3 of the Minimum wages Act, 1948 for Agricultural Labours shall be considered as the wage rate applicable to that area. Accordingly as per provision of Section 6(2) of

the Act, from the inception of the scheme till the financial year 2010-11, the wage rate in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA was determined on the basis of the minimum wage set by the State Government. However, from the financial year 2011-12, the Government of India started determining the wage rates using the Consumer Price Index for agricultural labour (CPI-AL).

To compensate the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers against inflation, the Ministry of Rural Development revises the wage rate every financial year based on change in Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL). **The index is different for different States/UTs as notified by Labour Bureau Shimla.** If the calculated wage rate of any State/UT is coming lower than the wage rate of previous year, it is being protected by maintaining the previous year wage rate. The wage rate is made applicable from 1st April of each financial year.

The overall % increase in wage rate for FY 2024-25 from the FY 2023-24 is about 7%.

However, each State/UT can provide wage over and above the wage rate notified by the Central Government.

State Governments of Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha were providing more than notified wage rates under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS from their own resources in last financial year 2023-24.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.11 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 4)

4.5 The Committee note that the Government of India notifies the wage rate under MNGREGA using Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) and by keeping the wage rates thus obtained on 1st April 2009 or Rs.100 whichever is more as the base for indexation for the States. Every year, wage rates are revised and notified by addition of incremental value to the base rate on the basis of CPI-AL. According to DoRD, this inflation is being accounted for based on the base rate of 2009. The Committee find this method of calculation using the base year of 2009-2010 obsolete and saturated to yield any desired figure commensurate with the present inflation and increased cost of living. It is felt that one of the probable mechanism to sort out the issue of lower wage rates can be achieved through the revision of base year and the base rates to a more closer time line alongwith increase in the base rate. The similar rationale was also proposed by the

recommendation of the Mahendra Dev Committee while suggesting that the baseline for MGNREGA Wage indexation from 2014 may be current minimum wage rate for unskilled agricultural labourers fixed by the States under the Minimum Wage Act or the current MGNREGA wage rate, whichever is higher. Thus, in light of the above rationale, the Committee recommend DoRD to explore the feasibility of revising the base year and base rate in such a manner to bring in an appreciable hike in the wage rates under MGNREGA.

Reply of the Government

4.6 As per Section 6 (1) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, the Central Government may, by notification specify the wage rate for its beneficiaries of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Further, section 6 (2) of the Act, provide that until such time as a wage rate is fixed by the Central Government in respect of any area in a State, the minimum wage fixed by the State Government under section 3 of the Minimum wages Act, 1948 for Agricultural Labours shall be considered as the wage rate applicable to that area.

Accordingly, as per provision of Section 6(2) of the Act, from the inception of the scheme till the financial year 2010-11, the wage rate in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA was determined on the basis of the minimum wage set by the State Government. However, from the financial year 2011-12, the Government of India started determining the wage rates using the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL).

Government of India has notified the wage rate under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA vide Gazette Notification. S.O. 82(E) dated 14th January, 2011 in exercise of the power conferred by Section 6(1) of Mahatma Gandhi NREG act, using CPI-AL as index and kept the wage rates as these obtained on 1st April, 2009 or Rs. 100 whichever is more as the base for indexation for the States/UTs

To compensate the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers against inflation, the Ministry of Rural Development revises the wage rate every financial year based on change in Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL). **The index is different for different States/UTs as notified by Labour Bureau Shimla.** If the calculated wage rate of a state is lower than the wage rate of the previous financial year then it is protected by continuing the wage rate of the previous financial year. The wage rate is made applicable from 1st April of each financial year.

The overall % increase in wage rate for FY 2024-25 from the FY 2023-24 is about **7%**.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.14 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 5)

4.7 The Committee note that the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) is used by DoRD for calculating the revision of wage rates under MGNREGA at the start of each Financial Year. After scrutinizing the pattern of increase in the wage rates under MGNREGA using the CPI-AL, the Committee feel that the current index was perhaps not sufficient to take into account the inflation during the time-period under study. The usage of such index has not reflected requisite quantum of hike in the MGNREGA wages. Both Mahendra Dev Committee and Dr.Nagesh Singh Committee have suggested that Consumer Price Index for Rural (CPI-Rural) may be considered as the appropriate index for protecting the wages against inflation as the consumption basket of CPI-R is of more recent vintage than CPI-AL. However, after going through the comparative data obtained from the DoRD regarding the wage rates under MGNREGA on the basis of CPI-AL and CPI-Rural for the ongoing financial year, the Committee find both the indexation resulting in almost similar wage rates for different States/UTs barring few fluctuations. In this regard, the Committee are of the view that DoRD should perhaps find a better approach to the problem of selecting a more suitable index for neutralising the inflationary effect at the time of revision of wage rates under MGNREGA. Hence, the Committee recommend that DoRD should adopt a much more economically viable method in identifying ways and means for the selection of an appropriate index which cater to the need of the hour for the positive revision of wage rates under MGNREGA according to the prevailing inflationary trend.

Reply of the Government

4.8 It is submitted that, as per Section 6 (1) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, Central Govt. may, by notification, specify the separate wage rate for the beneficiary of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. The rate is revised on the basis of Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL).

Government of India has notified the wage rate under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA vide Gazette Notification S.O. 82(E) dated 14th January, 2011 in exercise of the power conferred by Section 6(1) of Mahatma Gandhi NREG Act, using CPI-AL as index and kept the wage rates as these obtained on 1st April, 2009 or Rs.100 whichever is more as the base for indexation for the States.

For protecting the wage against the inflation, it has been decided to index the wage rate notified under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA to the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) while maintaining the distinction between the notified wage rate under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA and the minimum wage Act.

The overall % increase in wage rate for FY 2024-25 from the FY 2023-24 is about 7%.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.17 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 6)

4.9 The Committee note that the MGNREGA Act provides that the payment of wages should be done within fifteen days of the closure of muster rolls. However, the ground reality paints a stark picture contrary to the theoretical provision. The Committee have been enlightened time and again with this omnipresent issue of delay in payment of wages to the MGNREGA workers. Delving deep into the issue, the Committee, through their on-ground experiences and deliberations find that there are many reasons for delay in the payment of wages viz., delay/improper filling of Muster rolls, delayed release of Fund Transfer Orders, procedural hindrances at the ground level, non-adherence to provisions of MGNREGA for payment, etc. Instead of pointing to a single cause of concern, the Committee find that the reasons may vary place to place. Since the Committee feel that a holistic exercise need to be undertaken by the nodal agency, DoRD, to identify each issue separately and bring forward a stronger solution to deal with such issues, it is recommended that DoRD should get onboard all the stakeholders involved in the process of payment of wages to streamline the mechanism and ensure that MGNREGA beneficiaries do not suffer on account of delay in payment of wages any more.

Reply of the Government

4.10 The Ministry has taken various steps to ensure timely payment of wages to workers under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS. These include:

Up scaling of National Electronic Fund Management System (Ne-FMS) in 28 States and 3 Union Territories.

Intensive consultation with State Governments and other stakeholders to strategize timely payment of wages, verification of pending compensation claims etc.

Formulation of Standard Operating Procedure for monitoring of timely payment and payment of compensation.

Meetings with States/ UTs for reviewing the status of timely payment and payment of delay compensation.

States/UT's have been requested to ensure timely regeneration of rejected transaction and every fund release is tagged with priority release of rejected transaction.

Review meetings with Banks, NPCI and PFMS are conducted on a regular basis at central level to review the delays, if any and the stakeholders are directed to resolve the issues.

States/UTs have been requested to ensure correction of invalid accounts as per information provided by Public Financial Management System (PFMS).

Further, Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS) uses Aadhaar numbers to link a beneficiary's bank account with job cards, aiming to ensure faster, safer wage disbursement and reduce fraud under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Central Government is making wage payment directly into the Bank/ Post office account of the beneficiary as per the DBT protocol through a National Electronic Fund Management System (Ne-FMS) for the States under Ne-FMS. Currently, 98.67% Fund Transfer Orders (FTOs) are getting generated within statutory period of 15 days.

The recommendation of the Hon'ble committee has been noted and appropriate follow up action will be taken to ensure 100% timely payment of wages.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.20 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 10)

4.11 The Committee appreciate the efforts being undertaken by the DoRD in switching to completely Aadhar Based Payment System for the beneficiaries under MGNREGA. The aim to bring in greater transparency and reduce misappropriation of funds through the usage of technology is a welcome step and perhaps the need of the hour. There have been reported cases of non-seeding of Aadhar numbers of all the active job card holders, primarily due to pending cases of NPCI mapping. As on 21.11.2023, 14.12% of total job card holders are not Aadhar enabled under

MGNREGA. Moving over the technical aspect, there are practical constraints being faced by MGNREGA beneficiaries such as non-working of their Aadhar numbers, KYC compliance, ignorance about the linkage of Aadhar with their bank account etc. One should always remember that the target community of MGNREGA are mainly less educated, technologically challenged and having less fiscal management know-how. Therefore, the Committee feel that any mechanism to be activated needs to take care of all the mushrooming challenges and till the time all the major bottlenecks associated with Aadhar Based Payment Bridge System are not tackled sufficiently, including creation of awareness among the MGNREGA beneficiaries, the system should not be made mandatory. Alternative mechanism should always operate side by side to ensure that the primary goal of MGNREGA to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology. Hence, the Committee recommend to DoRD to strike a fine balance between the usage of technology for payment and ironing out the flaws associated with it, while ensuring that wages are paid timely to MGNREGA workers and they are not mandated with Aadhar compliance till the mechanism is made foolproof.

Reply of the Government

4.12 Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS) is a method of disbursing payment to Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers using their unique 12 digit Aadhaar number as their financial address. It uses Aadhaar numbers to link a beneficiary's bank account with job cards, aiming to ensure faster, safer wage disbursement and reduce fraud. All worker under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme are to receive their wages through an Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS).

Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, beneficiaries are getting wage payment for unskilled manual work, directly into the Bank/Post office account as provided by the beneficiary. The wage payment is routed through Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS). After detailed consultation with all States/UTs ABPS has been made mandatory since 1st January, 2024. As on date out of total of 13.02 crore active workers, 98.85% active workers Aadhaar has been seeded.

As per NREGASoft, in April 2024 more than 96% Mahatma Gandhi NREGS beneficiaries received their wages securely through Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (APBS). It may be noted that ABPS helps in timely payment of beneficiaries even in cases of frequent change of Bank account change in beneficiaries.

In case States/UTs face any kind of issues or problems in respect of Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge Systems the same are resolved on a priority basis. Ministry also organizes training programme frequently for functionaries of States/ UTs involved in implementation of ABPS.

Further, it is to mention that the Ministry arranges trainings as and when required by the States/UTs to keep updated with the process of Aadhaar seeding.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.23 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 11)

4.13 One of the other major initiative undertaken by DoRD to usher in greater transparency and accountability with the aid of technology is the usage of National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) app for capturing of attendance at work site. The Committee note that from 1st January, 2023 onwards, the workers under MGNREGA are supposed to capture their Geotagged two time stamped photographs in a day for marking their attendance. On the basis of the uploading of photographs, the attendance is counted and Muster rolls are accordingly generated. Although much water has flown under the bridge by now since the initiation of this mechanism, still there are few teething issues which remain to be addressed due to which workers on ground are facing obstacles in marking their attendance resulting in non-payment for the work actually done by them. The Committee have been enlightened on different occasions through credible sources and also through the insight gained from the study visits to different parts of the country that NMMS app, though a right step in eradicating malpractices to certain extent, still has a long way to go in terms of its execution. The reliability of MGNREGA beneficiaries on other persons with smart phones once again brings in the involvement and dependence upon a third party. Beneficiaries from various corners of the country have still expressed their inability to mark attendance on account of non-availability of smart phones, internet connectivity issues, boundation to remain at the site even after the work is completed for marking attendance to name a few. The Committee, once again are of the view that technology should always smoothen the passage and not turn out to be a dampener when its use is made mandatory. The larger intent of MGNREGA should always be

achieved in terms of rural-employment and till the time all the stakeholders, in this case, the MGNREGA beneficiaries, are not brought on board and acquainted with the usage, some other alternative should also remain in position for marking the attendance. So, the Committee recommend that DoRD should create awareness and provide facilities to the MGNREGA beneficiaries to get them acclimatized with the usage of the NMMS App while keeping in vogue a robust alternative mechanism also till that time.

Reply of the Government

4.14 To ensure more transparency in the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the States/UTs, capturing of attendance with geo-tagged, two time-stamped photographs of the workers in a day through National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) App for all the works (except individual beneficiary works) has been made mandatory from 1st January, 2023.

This increases citizen oversight of the Scheme besides enabling faster processing of payments. Worksite supervisors are responsible for capturing attendance along with geo-tagged photographs of the workers through the NMMS App.

Ministry has arranged various workshop at a regular interval to pursue hand holding support to the States/UTs. The technical issues being faced in NMMS App are taken up with National Informatics Centre (NIC), Rural Development on a real-time basis. The new provisions/ suggestions requested by the States/UTs are being incorporated. All the issues concerning the NMMS app are reviewed and resolved from time to time. Training have been scheduled by the Ministry whenever required by the States/UTs to keep updated with the usage of NMMS app.

NMMS app has been modified to capture the second photograph just after 4 hours of uploading the attendance and first photograph. The morning attendance along with the first photograph and second photograph can be captured in offline mode and to be uploaded once the device comes into a network. In case of exceptional circumstances due to which attendance could not be uploaded, the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) has been authorized to upload the manual attendance.

Regarding availability of the Smart phone, it may be mentioned that there is a widespread availability of smartphones in the rural areas. As per Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2021 of ASER Centre, which reported that 67.7% surveyed rural households have at least one smartphone. Similar data has been reported by other agencies. Further, these smart phones required by only one person of the GP, preferably by the GraminRozgarSevak (GRS) and is not needed by every worker.

Further, it is to mention that the Government is actively engaged with the State Government in establishing systems that ensure provision of work as per demand. To generate awareness about the provisions of the Scheme and to provide adequate employment opportunities to rural households under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, all

States/UTs have been requested to (i) initiate appropriate Information Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns including wall paintings for wide dissemination of the provisions of the Act, (ii) expand scope and coverage of demand registration system to ensure that demand for work under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS does not go unregistered, (iii) prepare plans in a participatory mode and get them approved in the Gram Sabha.

It is also submitted that no decline in generation of PD has been observed due to introduction of NMMS. Against generation of 293.7 crore PD in FY 2022-23, 309.07 crore PD has been generated in FY 2023-24 which shows that there is no adverse on PD generation due to NMMS. It is also submitted that a new system has since stabilized.

The recommendation given by Hon'ble Committee regarding creation of awareness among Mahatma Gandhi NREGS beneficiaries on use of NMMS has been noted.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.26 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 13)

4.15 The Committee find that the number of permissible works under MGNREGA has increased to 266. Also, the RE sought by DoRD for the ongoing Financial Year 2023-24 is Rs.1,10,000 crore. These aspects only strengthen the opinion that demand for work under MGNREGA has not diminished. Hence, the Committee find the demand from various quarters for raising the guaranteed number of days of work under MGNREGA from 100 to possibly 150 merits due weightage. The rationale behind such demand stems from the fact that the population of the country has been rising since the inception of MGNREGA in 2006 and so has the ambit of works under MGNREGA. By tweaking the nature of works and carrying out suitable convergence of MGNREGA with other schemes of Central/State, the expenditure on labour force required for various projects can be better channelized and utilised. Dovetailing of labour oriented projects such as PMGSY, PMAY-G with MGNREGA can only be a win-win situation. On this premise, the Committee opine that the scale of MGNREGA can be fine tuned by utilizing its labour force through proper mechanism. Increasing the guaranteed number of days shall act as an incentive to work under MGNREGA. Thus, the Committee recommend to DoRD to look into the issue with practical approach and undertake a study for reviewing the need and justifications for increasing the number of guaranteed days of work under MGNREGA from present

100 days to 150 days and necessary action may be taken according to the outcome of the study.

Reply of the Government

4.16 The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, is an Act to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in **rural areas of the country** by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The Ministry mandates the provision of additional 50 days of wage employment (beyond the stipulated 100 days) to every Scheduled Tribe Household in a forest area, provided that these households have no other private property except for the land rights provided under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006.

In addition to this, there is a provision for up to additional 50 days of wage employment in a financial year in drought/natural calamity affected notified rural areas.

As per Section 3 (4) of the Act, the State Governments may make provision for providing additional days of employment beyond the period guaranteed under the Act from their own funds

Details of National average days of employment provided per households under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in the last five financial years 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 2023-24 are given below.

Financial Year	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
National average days of employment availed per households	52.09	47.83	50.07	51.52	48.4

Under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, the average days of employment per household in each financial year in the last five financial years has remained around 50 days. Therefore, the Ministry is emphasizing generating awareness about the provisions of the Scheme and to provide adequate employment opportunities to rural households under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.29 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Serial No. 14)

4.17 A very important suggestion which came before the Committee was that of issuance of a separate job card for a differently abled person in a household. The Committee were briefed about the need and importance of a separate job card to

cater to the livelihood of a differently abled person. Normally, one job card is issued to a willing worker from a household. However, there are cases, wherein a family also comprises of a differently abled person, who can also undertake work under MGNREGA. Keeping in view that the range of MGNREGA works has diversified in much larger way and there is a hope of providing employment to differently abled persons according to their abilities. The plight and prayers of a differently abled person to live an esteemed life is oblivious to no one. The welfare nature of MGNREGA Scheme will perhaps not require much breaking away from the mould to open up its domain to also include the differently abled persons of the rural areas as a separate entity. This provisioning shall go a long way in empowering our disabled section of the population who have all the rights and wherewithal to compete and live life on equal terms with others. Therefore, the Committee implore upon the DoRD to take up this recommendation on humane grounds and make the scheme under MGNREGA 'Disabled Friendly' by providing them a separate Right to work and live with their heads high.

Reply of the Government

4.18 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is very inclusive and ensures equal opportunities for all rural workers, including differently-abled persons.

As per Schedule-II of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, 2005 the adult member of every household residing in any rural area and willing to do unskilled manual work may submit the names, age and the address of the household to the Gram Panchayat at the village level, in whose jurisdiction they reside, for registration of their household for issuance of a job card. **If the job seeker is a single woman or disabled person or aged person or released bonded labour or belonging to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, they must be given a special job card of a distinct colour** which will ensure them a special protection in providing work, work evaluation and work as site facilitates, as the case may be.

The provisions for differently abled persons under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Operational Guidelines are given as under:-

Para 9.3.1: The disabled or differently abled persons defined under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (1 of 1996) as persons with disabilities, the severity of which is 40% and above would be considered as special category of vulnerable persons for the purposes of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. The disabled persons as defined in the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (44 of 1999) are also to be considered as disabled for the purpose of inclusion in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Para 9.3.2: Since this category of people are differently abled, special conditions have to be created to facilitate their inclusion in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Para 9.3.3: Each State Government will identify specific works, which can be done by the disabled and vulnerable persons. In a village, different categories of persons with disabilities will be organized to come together as a fixed group to accomplish the works proposed for them under the Scheme, in a way that makes it possible for them to exercise their choice. On no grounds, should the disabled and vulnerable persons be paid lower wages as compared to other persons employed in Mahatma Gandhi NREGA works.

Here it is also submitted that Ministry has already formulated and notified the Accessibility guidelines for the persons with disability for all the schemes being administered by this Ministry. State/UTs have been advised to implement these guidelines in the works under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

(O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Paragraph No. 1.32 of Chapter I of the Report)

CHAPTER V

**RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH FINAL REPLIES OF
THE GOVERNMENT ARE STILL AWAITED**

NIL

(DoRD O.M.No.H-11013/01/2024-RE-II dated 12.06.2024)

NEW DELHI
13 December, 2024
22 Agrahayana, 1946 (Saka)

Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Rural
Development & Panchayati Raj

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYATI RAJ (2024-25)**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON
FRIDAY, THE 13th DECEMBER, 2024**

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1520 hrs. in Committee Room 'C', Ground Floor, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka -- **Chairperson**

MEMBERS**Lok Sabha**

2. Shri Sandipanrao Asaram Bhumare
3. Shri Raju Bista
4. Shri Vijay Kumar Dubey
5. Dr. Sanjay Jaiswal
6. Shri Bhajan Lal Jatav
7. Shri Jugal Kishore
8. Dr. D. Ravi Kumar
9. Shri Imran Masood
10. Shri Janardan Mishra
11. Shri Kota Srinivasa Poojary
12. Shri Omprakash Bhupalsinh Alias Pavan Rajenimbalkar

Rajya Sabha

13. Smt. Geeta *alias* Chandraprabha
14. Shri Samirul Islam

Secretariat

1. Shri Des Raj Shekhar - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Vinay P. Barwa - Director
3. Shri L. Singson - Deputy Secretary

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened for consideration and adoption of Draft Report on action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the 37th Report on 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) – An insight into wage rates and other matters relating thereto' pertaining to the Department of Rural Development (Ministry of Rural Development).

3. Draft Report was taken up for consideration and after discussion, the Committee adopted the same with minor modification. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the aforesaid Draft Report and present the same to the Parliament.

The Committee then adjourned.

[Vide para 4 of Introduction of Report]

**ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE
RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE THIRTY-SEVEN REPORT (17TH LOK
SABHA) OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND
PANCHAYATI RAJ**

- I. Total number of recommendations: 18
- II. Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:
Serial Nos. 1, , 7, 8, 9, , , 12, 15, 16, 17, 18
Total:9
Percentage: - 50%
- III. Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of replies of the Government:
Serial No. NIL
Total: NIL
Percentage:- 0%
- IV. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee:
Serial No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14
Total: 9
Percentage: - 50%
- V. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited:
Serial No. NIL
Total: NIL
Percentage:- 0%