

an>

Title: Need to provide adequate funds under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, particularly, in West Bengal.

PROF. SAUGATA ROY (DUM DUM): The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is a demand-driven, but instead of responding to rural demands for work, the Union Government wants to make it allocation based. As opposed to a demand for Rs. 60,000 crores for implementing MGNREGS in 2008, the UPA Government allotted Rs. 40,000 crores, which it reduced to Rs. 33,000 crores in 2010. The Union Government propose to further restrict who gets work and where by restricting it to only 200 districts. They propose to change the labour and material ratio from 60:40 currently to 51:49, which will cut funds for wages.

In response to an RTI, we have got the information that the Central Government has denied MGNREGS funds to Bihar, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal despite demand for work under MGNREGS. Secretary, Rural Development, Bihar had written to Ministry of Rural Development in August saying that the State had received Rs. 256.4 crores against the State's request for release of Rs. 1,082.4 crores. Earlier this year, in March, West Bengal Minister had written to the Ministry pointing out that though West Bengal had achieved, over 11 crore person days between January and March, the State received Rs. 2,394 crores instead of its request for Rs. 3,838 crores.

I, therefore, urge the Government to take remedial steps in this regard. Earlier this week, rights groups at a gathering of 15,000 people have demonstrated in the capital. They demanded that the rights earned under Food Security Act, Forest Rights Act and MGNREGA should be preserved. The Central Government should take note of this.