

First month of new fiscal sees sharp rise in MGNREGS payout

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Timely wage payments under the rural job guarantee scheme have clocked a sharp rise in the first month of the financial year, raising hopes of checking a major malaise that has been plaguing the flagship employment programme.

As per figures released by the rural development ministry, 89.08% of wage payments have been made within 15 days of the work done in 2017. The MGNREGA law stipulates that payments to workers be made within a fortnight of work done and every day's delay attracts penalty to be paid as compensation.

The delay has been high over the years, with just around 43% of timely payments registered in 2016, a senior official said.

In contrast, 89.08% of wage payments have been made in 2017, which means April and the first fortnight of May during which 20.88 crore person days of work has been generated.

The improvement is being attributed to the Centre's close monitoring of the situation in the states. The Centre is keeping an alert eye on the closure of muster rolls following completion of work under the job scheme – the time when the financial orders are raised. The ministry

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has been reminding the states about the completion of muster rolls and nudging them about payments.

Officials claimed the delay has also been on account of failure of states to submit the audits and the financial statements on time. In such cases, the RD ministry has told the states that they should make payments against which the Centre will release the money as soon as their financial documents are submitted.

The RD ministry is hopeful of maintaining a high rate of timely payments, with forecast of a timely and good monsoon likely to ease the pressure on the scheme. MGNREGA registers high demand of work in times of delayed monsoon or drought.

“The ministry is continuously striving in partnership with states to ensure timely payment of wages to MGNREGA workers directly into their Aadhar linked bank accounts,” the official statement said.