

Dear Sri

Subject : Computer based information system for MIS of NREGS and other rural development programmes.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) which has been implemented since February, 2006 and has been gradually expanded covers 330 districts as on today. It is expected to cover the entire country by 2009. Launching of the programme has been a historic event as it provides statutory support for guaranteed employment of 100 days in a year to rural households. The programme has made a good beginning and many States have started showing substantial achievements in meeting the demand for work by the rural wage seekers.

The Government of India attaches the highest importance to NREGS as one of its most important flagship programmes addressing the needs of the rural poor. A comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) has been made operational through an application software developed by NIC. With the exception of Andhra Pradesh, all the states are using this software that is being constantly improved and expanded. However, the intensity, regularity as well as the coverage of various implementing levels of the State Government in the use of this computer based MIS is not uniform across the states. It is imperative that this MIS is made fully operational at the cutting edge particularly at the Programme Officer's level. Typically, the Programme Officers (PO) are located at the Block Office corresponding to Panchayat Samiti or Mandal. It is not enough if the software is used at the state headquarters or at the district headquarters

Union Finance Minister, during his recent review of the major budget announcements, has desired that this software should be made fully operational in all the States. This would require major effort from your side and constant monitoring. The following line of action is suggested:

A dedicated team may be put in place at the State level to support implementation of this software at the District and Block levels. This would not

only monitor the availability of ICT infrastructure at these levels but also ensure continuous training of personnel involved in the actual operation of the software solutions. This would also monitor closely the operation and maintenance part of the ICT infrastructure as well as the human resources required at the district and block levels. At the district level, a team of one or two professionals may be dedicated for this programme along with a non-IT manager. This team should be attached to the District Programme Coordinator for NREGS. At the Block level, you may have at least one professional supported by one or two Data Entry Operators or what we can call para-professionals with IT background.

I would like you to focus on the following activities:

1. Availability of adequate number of computers (state, district and block levels)
2. Availability of IT professionals or trained manpower
3. Availability of data connectivity
4. Training of the personnel at the block and district level using the MIS, through the Application Software developed by NIC and already in use.

We have already authorized the State Governments to take appropriate steps in this regard and have indicated that expenditure on the above items could be charged to the NREGP. While computers purchase and supply is the easiest of the activities, making available trained IT professionals and trained personnel may be more difficult. While there may be restrictions on employment through creation of regular posts, you may hire persons on contract or through service providers. Orissa has followed a good model by hiring technically qualified persons for every block and this has facilitated high quality usage of ICT for rural development programmes. This is a model worth emulating.

As for data connectivity, in case quality data connection is not available from NIC or any other non-commercial internet service provider (ISP), you are free to take data connection from any ISP which could be BSNL or any other private ISP. The charges for taking high speed connection can be met from the programme expenditure. We hope that in due course, when your State Wide Area Network (SWAN) becomes fully operational, this aspect of the requirement can be met more reliably. However, pending that, you are free to immediately avail data connectivity from any ISP. Suitable authorization may be given to the blocks if not already done and it may be ensured that every block has such connectivity before the end of September.

For the training requirements, we will be happy to assist and organize programmes for the trainers at Delhi or at State headquarters so that they, in

turn, can train the large number of personnel who will be actually involved with ICT usage for managing MIS for NREGP at block and district levels.

For this purpose, it is necessary to undertake a reality check and compile data on the current status of ICT infrastructure, human resources and actual implementation of NREGS and other MIS at the block level. For collecting this information, we have designed a format. A copy of the format will be available on the website of NREGA (www.nrega.nic.in) by 16-8-2007. A web-enabled software is being developed so that the format can be filled in on-line. The hard (paper) copy of the format enclosed may be filled up and sent to the State Secretary in charge of NREGS and to Shri Sanjay Mishra, Director, Ministry of Rural Development, Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi – 110001 by Speed Post after filling up the above format. This has to be done even if the data is filled on-line through the web-enabled software available on the NREGA website.

You may kindly undertake a quick review at your level and make sure that the data in the format is compiled and the consolidated data is sent to us by Speed Post within the next 10 days at the latest.

The collection of data will only help you to appreciate the dimensions of the problem and to draw up an action plan to complete the task within a definite timeframe.

After you take stock of the status in your State, if you have any major problems for data connectivity for any block headquarters in the districts covered under NREGP, we will be more than happy to assist you by interacting with the relevant Central Ministries.

The Government of India attaches the highest importance to the intensive use of the NREGS software at each block so that monitoring can be much more effective. The net result should be an overall improvement in the quality of performance in the implementation of the programme.

You may note that the format also seeks information on the banking infrastructure in every block. This is also required for understanding the present status of the banking arrangements to improve the funds flow to the blocks.

Incidentally, while we are giving highest importance to availability of such infrastructure/human resources for blocks in the districts covered by NREGA, we expect that the whole State should be covered for operationalising similar MIS for various other programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development. Once such relevant infrastructure and human resources are available, you can also effectively use them for monitoring various

programmes of the State Government as well as Central Government programmes of other Ministries.

A senior officer in your Department may be put exclusively in charge of monitoring collection of this data and transmitting the same to this Ministry. He/she should be in regular touch with this Ministry (Shri Sanjay Mishra, Director, Ministry of Rural Development, Tel. No.011-23070129).

Kindly note that any delay in providing the data or in completing the operation of the MIS at each block may adversely affect the programme implementation. We will also take a serious note of this while releasing further instalment of funds to the relevant districts/states.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

Encl. As above.

(Dr. Subas Pani)