

Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme a big hit in Manipur

MOREH (MANIPUR): The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is making a good impact in several villages of Manipur.

In Moreh block comprising 95 villages, people are enjoying the benefits of the scheme as they are gainfully employed. The Central Government launched the ambitious NREGS in 2006 to provide employment to villagers.

Villagers who wasted away their time aimlessly are now harnessing their productive potential to the hilt. They are getting more than a hundred days of employment now.

This has also helped them in channelizing their energy and is keeping them away from militant groups, which target unemployed youth to swell their ranks.

"It feels nice to be earning a livelihood and living a life of dignity and peace. It is literally a double benefit. In the past, most of the schemes implemented by the government simply failed to work, but after the implementation of NREGS, the government machinery is in action," said Ngamjthang Haokip, village chief.

Yamsh Baite, a villager said, "All of us were unemployed and eked out a hand to mouth existence after hard labour. However, NREGS has provided us a stable income and a dignified job."

However, in Moreh block located near the Myanmar border, which has shown significant development under this scheme, villagers are paying more attention to rural connectivity than anything else.

"Under this scheme, every household is entitled to 100 days of wage in a year and it is a guarantee. So, all the villagers stand to benefit," said Hopson Chothe, Additional Deputy Commissioner.

If NREGS is transforming individuals' lives, it is also changing the infrastructure in remote villages. The scheme covers many areas of development like rural connectivity, water conservation and harvesting, drought resistance and micro irrigation projects, renovation of traditional water bodies and land development.

In fact, this scheme, which was started to tackle the problem of rural unemployment, has also encouraged traditional handicraft industries, like textile weaving and bamboo work.

Another positive aspect is that it has contained militancy as people's support for underground groups is diminishing. Militant groups are now finding it difficult to recruit unemployed villagers as they are getting assured jobs and the promise of a better and peaceful life.

Started on February 23, 2006, the NREGS covers all 593 districts. Initially, it was implemented only in 200 districts.

Source: Economic Times

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