

'Rural job scheme on track'

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CHENNAI: The second phase of implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in four districts in Tamil Nadu is on track, when compared to the six districts covered in the first phase, the State Government has announced.

"The scheme cannot be implemented overnight since it requires extensive preparation. This includes the selection of three projects for each of the 1,602 village panchayats in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Tirunelveli and Karur, with the approval of the panchayats and the gram sabhas," Rural Development secretary K Ashok Vardhan Shetty said here on Wednesday.

Responding to the report titled NREG - A failed job in four districts which appeared in *this website's newspaper* columns on Wednesday, he said that the preparatory work for the implementation of the scheme had been completed as per schedule.

"We did not want to start the works in October and November because of the rains. The projects will begin in mid-December. The period from February to September is the right time to implement the scheme.

However, this will not be possible in the first year since an extended amount of time has been taken up for the preparation," Shetty clarified. In fact, the Centre had hailed Tamil Nadu for the successful implementation of the scheme in Cuddalore earlier.

Listing out the preparatory works, Shetty said that detailed estimates for each project would be finalised only after field visits by engineers to the respective panchayats, in accordance with the administrative sanction of the District Collectors.

"This has been completed," he said and added that three rounds of extensive training have been imparted to all the village panchayat presidents, officers of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), officials of the respective Blocks and engineering staff on the implementation of the scheme.

The government has almost completed recruiting, training and positioning 303 technical assistants and 105 computer assistants for the on-site and offsite monitoring of works, besides printing job cards for registered persons and opening NREGS bank accounts in each panchayat for the release of funds. The pilot works will begin soon, Shetty informed.

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