

Rural job scheme to come under social scanner

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) being implemented in Wayanad and Palakkad districts to provide employment to members of families below the poverty line will be subjected to social audit soon. Specific guidelines have been drawn up for conducting the audit in a transparent manner. The State government has won acclaim for implementing the scheme in a competent manner and is now taking steps for assessing the impact.

Grama panchayats will be the facilitators for the audit but the auditors to be selected by the grama sabhas in each locale will mostly be those who have never been part of the implementation process.

All stages of execution, ranging from an awareness drive about the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) among the target group to evaluation of the intrinsic worth of the works taken up under the scheme, will come under the scanner.

Being one of the significant components of all developmental efforts, social audit is an exhaustive and disinterested assessment of the way in which public funds have been expended to raise public accountability and transparency of the mode of implementation as also to empower the marginalised sections, which are the main beneficiaries of such Centrally sponsored schemes.

A series of steps have been proposed for conducting the audit. The preliminary arrangements for conducting the audit should begin at least a month in advance and applications should be accepted from volunteers to take up the task without expecting any remuneration.

A five-member team to be constituted for the audit will comprise the ward member, a woman, an SC/ST representative nominated by the grama sabha and the candidate who has emerged runners-up in the previous civic election from the ward. The secretary of the audit team will be a member from the neighbouring ward. Neighbourhood groups, worksites, labour banks or collective grouping of workers employed under the scheme will be the platforms to collect information for the social audit.

The audit will not be a one-time affair but a continuing process. Registration, distribution of job cards, wages, facilities in worksites including medical care, standards and norms applied for selecting works, jobs given to SC/ST and

families below the poverty line, preparation of estimates, maintenance of muster roll, worth of the assets created under the scheme, availability of materials and implements and the significance of the completed works will be subjected to exhaustive evaluation.

The team should prepare detailed tables and report of the scheme and present the same in the grama sabhas. It is obligatory for the panchayat committees to provide data and support for conducting the audit.

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