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SECRETARY



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Dear Colleague.

Subject: Actions being taken by Department of Rural Development under different schemes with respect to Covid 19.

All of us are aware that the Country is passing through a challenging time. To combat the pandemic Corona Virus Disease. Covid 19, effectively it is imperative that we follow what our Hon'ble Prime Minister has emphasised in his address to the nation on 24th March, 2020 on country-wide 21-day lockdown so that the chain of the virus can be broken.

2. This 21-day lockdown has serious implications for rural livelihoods particularly for the vulnerable classes of people. To mitigate these effects the Government of India has been taking various steps including the announcement of "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package".

3. Accordingly, Department of Rural Development, Government of India in close collaboration with the State Governments would be focusing on the following –
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS):

- a) MGNREGS wages have been revised with effect from 1st April 2020. The average national increase is Rs 20.
- b) Focus of MGNREGS may be on individual beneficiary oriented works which directly benefit SC, ST and women headed households as well as small and marginal farmers and other poor household. However, close consultation and guidance of the State as well as district authorities would be necessary to ensure that lock down conditions are not violated and norms of social distancing are scrupulously followed.
- c) Ministry of Rural Development is according top priority to liquidating the wage and material arrears. An amount of about Rs 4431 cr has been released to States to liquidate these liabilities of current fiscal and remaining such liabilities would be liquidated by 15th of April 2020.

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National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):-

- a) To provide immediate relief to the vulnerable, the Ministry would release to the States/UTs first instalment of Central funds immediately in the first week of April 2020. States / UTs may, in turn, immediately release Old Age, Widow and Disability pension of first 3 months together in the accounts of to the beneficiaries including the respective top-up by each State/UT.
- b) Additionally, the Government has also announced ex-gratia payment of Rs. 1,000/- in two instalments of Rs. 500/- each in a period of three months, i.e. April-June, 2020, to each of the beneficiaries of Old Age and Widow Pension. This will be an additionality over and above the pension being disbursed to these two categories of pension holders and would also be released in the first week of April 2020.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) :-

- a) The Government will release the first installment of the approved action plan of the states under DAY-NRLM in the first week of April, 2020. DAY-NRLM Division of the Ministry would issue instructions to states to first apportion Revolving Fund (RF) and Community Investment Fund (CIF) to the respective community institutions. In addition, states may also release funds, as per eligibility norms for SVEP component, which may specially help small enterprises involved in essential services like running of grocery stores.
- b) The Government has also announced giving ex-gratia payment of Rs. 1,500/- to women Jan Dhan account holders at the rate of Rs. 500/- per month for three months through Direct Benefit Transfer to the their account.
- c) Additionally, the Government has also decided to increase the limit of loan amount, without any collateral, to a SHG from the existing Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh. This is to encourage SHGs to take up higher order income generating activities that may help in speedy recovery of the local livelihood activities from the effects of Covid-19.

4. While the states / UTs are requested to take immediate action on the steps mentioned above, they may also like to take other appropriate action to ensure that hardships to the villagers are mitigated and rural livelihoods are strengthened.

Regards.

Yours sincerely,

(Rajesh Bhushan)

To: All Addl. Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, Secretaries, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development All States / UTs.