

Centre makes digitally capturing MGNREGA attendance universal from January 1

The directive comes even as many complaints and loopholes pointed out earlier by users of the pilot app-based project have not been plugged yet

December 26, 2022 08:51 pm | Updated December 27, 2022 07:33 am IST - w Delhi

SOBHANA K. NAIR

COMMENTS

SHARE

 READ LATER



Image for representation purpose only. | Photo Credit: V.V. Krishnan

Digitally capturing the attendance of workers employed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGREGS) has been made universal by the Centre from January 1, 2023.

The Union government, arguing for transparency and accountability in May 2021, had started a pilot project to capture attendance via a mobile application, the National Mobile Monitoring

System (NMMS).

From May 16, 2022, capturing attendance via the app was made compulsory for all worksites with 20 or more workers. This required uploading two time-stamped and geotagged photographs of the workers. The job fell on the mates/supervisors, who are paid only marginally more than the unskilled workers. There were widespread complaints over the lack of technical support, the necessity to own a smartphone, paying for an Internet connection, and issues with erratic Internet connectivity.

Also Read | [Clean swipe for MGNREGS attendance app only in 8 States](#)

In the latest order, dated December 23, the Ministry has ordered that digitally capturing attendance is now mandatory for all worksites, regardless of the number of workers engaged, and will be applicable from January 1, 2023.

This directive comes even as many complaints and loopholes pointed out earlier by users have not been plugged yet. Siraj Dutta, who is associated with the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha in Jharkhand, points out three major problems with the new system. The app-based attendance system carries forward the problem with electronic muster rolls, which replaced the paper muster rolls and was in use before the NMMS was introduced. Here, the muster roll has to be generated based on demand and therefore, no worker can come and join at the worksite. And if out of the ten workers on the electronic muster roll only two turn up, usually the worksite is not opened, therefore, in a way, denying them work too.

“The second big problem is the two-time stamped photographs. Often, the workers may finish their work but are forced to return to the worksite for the second photograph,” Mr. Dutta said.

The endless conditions placed on MNREGS workers themselves, many activists feel, is enough to dissuade them from relying on the scheme, thus failing its basic purpose. “Every time they [the government] have brought in a technology-based solution, they claim it will remove corruption. Are they saying now that they are capturing attendance via a mobile application, there will be no corruption? These are blatant methods to reduce the spread and effectiveness of the programme,” Nikhil Dey, founder member of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, said.