



NREGA Sangharsh Morcha

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NREGA Workers Meet MoRD Secretary Shailesh Kumar; Conclude two-day Protest with Tribute to Babsaheb Ambedkar

Under the banner of the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha, hundreds of NREGA workers from across India staged a two-day protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi against the **“anti-worker, anti-poor” government led by PM Narendra Modi**. The workers demand immediate action to address systemic issues plaguing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA), such as delayed wages, deletion of job cards, and the inadequate allocation of funds by the Central Government.

The protest began with a tribute to the architect of the Indian Constitution Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Invoking his ideals of equality, liberty, dignity, and fraternity, Uttar Pradesh’s Rambeti asserted, “Babasaheb fought for the rights of the poor and the marginalized. Today, we honor his legacy by standing against policies that threaten the very rights he championed.” The workers also marked 32 years since the demolition of the Babri Masjid by far-right Hindutva forces, resolving to fight the same divisive communal forces that threaten the country’s social fabric today.

Dr. V. Sivadasan, Rajya Sabha MP from Kerala, attended the protest and extended support for the workers’ cause. Highlighting how states like Kerala have implemented welfare boards and social security for NREGA workers, Dr. Sivadasan vowed to raise the workers’ issues in Parliament and take their fight to the highest echelons of the Indian Government. Comrade Krishnaprasad from All India Kisan Sabha also joined the demonstration, expressing solidarity with the NREGA workers’ struggle.

NREGA Sangharsh Morcha lambasted the Ministry of Rural Development for its response in Parliament that it did not have data on the quantum of wages pending under MGNREGA. The protesting workers dubbed the Modi government **“No Data Sarkar”** for its repeated failure to provide data on critical issues affecting the lives of the poor, be it the deaths of manual scavengers or the plight of migrant workers during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Chhotelal, a NREGA worker from Bihar, highlighted the **deletion of over 9 crore job cards since FY 22-23**, exacerbated by the Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS). Strict matching criteria between job cards, Aadhaar details, and bank accounts have led to mass disqualifications due to minor discrepancies. Workers demanded an immediate halt to this process, calling it discriminatory and a violation of their rights. Another key grievance is the systemic underfunding of MGNREGA that leads to weeks or months of delay in payment of wages, with no compensation paid for these delays. Once funds are exhausted—often halfway through the fiscal year—workers are unable to find work, violating their legal entitlement to employment guaranteed by law.

A delegation of workers led by economist Jean Dreze went to Krishi Bhawan to present their issues and list of demands to the Secretary of the Ministry of Rural Development Shailesh Kumar. “This is not just about wages; this is about dignity, survival, and justice,” emphasised Bina Mahato. NREGA Sangharsh Morcha vowed to continue its fight until MGNREGA is implemented in its letter and spirit and the Central Government takes concrete steps to secure the rights and dignity of the rural poor.

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