

# 70% of NREGS fund for water & land

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NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH: The government today said close to 70 per cent of funds under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) are used for water conservation and land development.

"Close to 70 per cent of the expenditure under the MGNREGS has been on water conservation and land development. In the initial years, most of the state governments used the fund for road development," rural development minister Jairam Ramesh said in Rajya Sabha during Question Hour. Till February, the Centre has released Rs 24,722 crore fund to the states.

The minister said that a committee had been set up under Planning Commission member Mr Mihir Shah to consider other works which could be brought under the purview of the scheme.

"A set of 30 additional permissible works under MGNREGS has been recommended by the Committee. Out of which, 28 are related to agri and livestock," he said.

Noting that there have been instances of diversion of funds, he said the Comptroller and Auditor General of India would audit the expenditure of 12 high spending states. Admitting that the scheme could not be taken to the extent it should have in some poor states, Mr Ramesh said the primary objective of the scheme was to enhance the livelihood security of the rural households by providing up to 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a year.

"Creation of durable assets and strengthening livelihood resource base of the rural poor is also an important objective of the Act," he said.

Of the total Rs 24,722 crore fund released till February, Mr Ramesh said Uttar Pradesh has got the highest at Rs 4,047 crore, followed by Madhya Pradesh at Rs 2,534 crore.