

## MGNREGA

# Low wage issue raised at CMs' sub-group meet

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THE SUB-GROUP of chief ministers formed to look at ways to ensure convergence of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with agricultural policy has raised the issue of MGNREGA wages being well below minimum wages in several states.

The sub-group was constituted following the NITI Aayog governing council meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to meet the NDA's promise of doubling farmers income by 2022. It held its first meeting on Thursday which was attended by Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath. Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani participated through video conferencing. Two other members — West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu — sent in their recommendations in writing.

“The issue of MGNREGA wages being well below the min-

imum wages paid by states was raised by Bihar CM and supported by the others. They agreed that MGNREGA wages need to be revised and a way has to be found to address this discrepancy and bridge the gap,” said an official.

With the Finance Ministry refusing to bring the central MGNREGA wages on par with the minimum agricultural wages paid by states, in 2018-19, the MGNREGA wages of as many as 28 of the 36 states and Union Territories fell below minimum wages. Moreover, the annual wage increase this year was a low 2.9 per cent owing to the Finance Ministry's rejection of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) recommendation to index the annual MGNREGA wage revision to Consumer Price Index (Rural) instead of CPI (Agricultural Labourers). In Thursday's meeting, the MoRD raised this issue of wage indexation in its presentation made to the sub-group.

The official said the NITI Aayog and MoRD will hold national consultations before the report of the sub groups is finalised over the next three months.