Muted beginning for VB-G RAM G

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EMPLOYMENT GENERATION UNDER the government's revamped rural job guarantee programme saw a sharp decline, registering a fall of 49.94% year-on-year in July, as per official data. The drop came as the government transitioned from the two-decade-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to the newly-launched Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G, from July 1 this year.

Official data as on August 9 shows that only 76.7 million persondays were generated under the VB-G RAM G scheme in July 2026 – which is 49.94% lower compared with 153.3 million generated under the MG-NREGS in the same month last year.

Persondays is a unit of measurement based on an ideal amount of work done by a person in one working day.

In its first month, VB-G RAM G sees almost 50% y-o-y dip in rural jobs.

The number of households who availed the rural job guarantee scheme came down by 51.45% to 6.89 million in July this year under the VB G RAM G scheme. Under the MGNREGS, the figure stood at 14.2 million in the year-ago period.

The number of persondays of employment generated through rural job guarantee schemes has actually been on decline since March 2025 when 175.6 million were generated under NREGS. This was 0.70% lower than 176.9 million in March 2024.

Since then there has been a year-on-year decline in the monthly figure of employment generated under NREGS till June 2026, the last month of the UPA-era scheme.

The July slide in employment generation under VB-G RAM G is significant in view of the erratic monsoon.

As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), 50% of the country's 741 districts have reported deficit to serious deficit rainfall from June 1 to August 3. In such a situation, the rural job guarantee scheme becomes a fallback option for unskilled agricultural labourers.

According to the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, area coverage under kharif crop was reported at 8,942 million hectare as on July 31, 2026 – which was 26.50% lower as compared to 9,207 million hectares in the corresponding period last year.

Sources said that one of the reasons for drop in employment generation may be because of a pause in the scheme during the kharif sowing season. However, there is no data about sowing season pause available in the public domain.

Responding to an email, an official with the Ministry of Rural Development said, "VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 has been implemented successfully across all rural areas of the country with effect from July 1, 2026.

The transition from MGNREGA to VB–G RAM G has been smooth, seamless and technology-enabled, with all States/UTs notifying their respective schemes and the complete administrative and digital ecosystem being operationalised before commencement of the programme from day one."

"To facilitate uninterrupted implementation, the Central Government has provided a record Budget Estimate of ₹95,692 crore for FY 2026–27, the highest ever for any rural employment programme," the official said.

Around 63% of the total persondays generated so far have been contributed by women, substantially exceeding the statutory requirement of one-third participation, he added.

CCI chief bats for BRICS cooperation

SUSTAINED COOPERATION AMONG BRICS competition authorities will help develop effective, future-ready approaches for competition law enforcement and ensure fair and competitive renewable energy markets, according to CCI Chairperson Ravneet Kaur.

The chairperson made the remarks at the meeting of the heads of the BRICS competition authorities held at Udaipur in Rajasthan on Saturday.

At the meeting, organised by the Competition Commission of India (CCI), the representatives exchanged views on recent developments in competition law and policy in their respective jurisdictions, including significant enforcement initiatives and emerging challenges in their domestic markets, according to a release.

Key findings of a collaborative study on 'Emerging Competition Landscape in the Renewable Energy Sector in BRICS' were also presented at the meeting. In her special address, Kaur highlighted the increasingly cross-border nature of digital markets and emerging technologies.

Sustained cooperation and knowledge-sharing among BRICS competition authorities would be essential for developing informed, effective, and future-ready approaches to competition enforcement, she said. The CCI chief also emphasised that continued collaboration among BRICS competition authorities would contribute to fostering fair and competitive renewable energy markets while advancing the shared objectives of sustainable growth and energy security, as per the release issued by the regulator. A joint statement of the heads of the BRICS competition authorities titled 'Strengthening Cooperation to Promote Fair Competition, including in Renewable Energy Markets'" was adopted at the meeting.

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