



Under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's leadership, we have created a new model of upliftment of the poor, progress of villages and 'Lakhpati Didi': Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

No one can stop the creation of a prosperous, self-reliant, powerful and Developed India under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi : Shri Chouhan

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Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, and Rural Development, Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday spoke in the Rajya Sabha about the contribution of various flagship programmes — ranging from the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and MGNREGA to Viksit Bharat – G RAM G, PM Awas, Ayushman Bharat, free ration, Lakhpati Didi and rural employment schemes — in driving the country's progress. He said that Mahatma Gandhi continues to live in the nation's thoughts, emotions and collective conscience. In his address, which lasted for over one-and-a-half hours, the Union Minister repeatedly emphasised that Mahatma Gandhi's ideals remain deeply embedded in the country's policies and governance approach.

Describing Viksit Bharat – G RAM G as an “upgrade of MGNREGA”, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the scheme balances the interests of both farmers and labourers by providing a statutory guarantee of 125 days of employment instead of 100 days, along with better wages, unemployment allowance and legal safeguards such as payment of interest in case of delays. He informed the House that the Central Government has made the largest-ever budgetary provision of ₹95,692 crore for the Viksit Bharat – G RAM G scheme, representing the Centre's share alone. Responding to opposition concerns regarding the source of funding for states, Shri Chouhan listed state-wise allocations and said that nearly every state, including Jharkhand, Kerala, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Gujarat, Tripura, Haryana, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Goa and Maharashtra, has made provisions for the scheme in their budgets, including those governed by Congress or other parties.

“You may continue to stage opposition in Delhi, but in the states, your own governments have approved this scheme. This clearly shows that the scheme has been accepted across the country,” he said.

A new model centred on the poor, villages and 'Lakhpati Didi' In his reply, Shri Chouhan outlined a wide array of pro-poor schemes implemented by the government. He said that under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, crores of pucca houses have been constructed; more than 11 crore toilets have been built; crores of LPG connections have been provided under the Ujjwala scheme; tap water has reached homes under 'Har Ghar Jal'; healthcare of up to ₹5 lakh is being provided under Ayushman Bharat; affordable medicines are being made available through Jan Aushadhi centres; more than 80 crore people are receiving relief through

free ration; over 52 crore Mudra loans have been disbursed; and initiatives such as Skill India, Atal Pension Yojana, PM Garib Kalyan and Kisan Samman Nidhi are being implemented. He said these initiatives reflect the government's commitment to the principle of prioritising the "last person in the queue", as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi.

On women's empowerment, Shri Chouhan said that today crores of women are progressing through self-help groups under the 'Lakhpati Didi' initiative. Through bank linkages, entrepreneurship and models such as 'Drone Didi', 'Krishi Sakhi', 'Bank Sakhi' and 'Pashu Sakhi', women are advancing economically and socially. He said the government has now set a target of creating six crore 'Lakhpati Didis'.

"Our resolve is that no sister should remain poor. Women who were once limited to making papads and pickles are now moving towards enhancing the dignity of institutions ranging from Panchayats to Parliament," he said.

Firm response on questions related to West Bengal

Responding to allegations of "discrimination" regarding the stoppage of MGNREGA funds in West Bengal, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan rejected the claims and said the action was not political but based on legal and administrative grounds. He said reports from various teams and social audits had revealed serious irregularities, including the use of machines in place of labour, contractor-driven works, splitting of projects into multiple parts for awarding contracts, fake job cards, fake muster rolls and irregular financial practices described as an "80-20 split". He also cited instances such as elderly individuals being shown as labourers and cases where individuals withdrew MGNREGA funds after months despite not working.

He said that around 11 lakh irregularities had been reported through social audits and complaints. Despite repeated instructions from the Centre to rectify these issues, the state government failed to take corrective measures. He also alleged that even High Court directives were disregarded, which eventually led to the decision to stop MGNREGA funds. Shri Shivraj Chouhan clarified that funds for other schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, PM Awas and agricultural programmes continued to be released to West Bengal, as the intention was not to punish the public but to correct systemic irregularities. "Funds are not meant merely for expenditure; accountability is equally essential," he said.

Referring to Punjab, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that during the MGNREGA period under the previous UPA government, the state received only ₹858 crore, whereas under the current government led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Punjab has received more than ₹10,000 crore for MGNREGA. Despite this, he said, allegations of discrimination against the Centre continue to be made. Highlighting India's growing global stature, Shri Chouhan said that whether it is the gas and oil crisis or the Russia-Ukraine conflict, major global powers now take India's interests into consideration under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. He expressed confidence that the vision of building a prosperous, self-reliant, powerful and Developed India (Viksit Bharat) cannot be stopped, given the direction and leadership currently guiding the country.

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