

# Rajasthan launches mega housing scheme for the rural poor

10 lakh houses to be built in the next three years

Special Correspondent

**JAIPUR:** The Rajasthan Government's ambitious housing programme for the rural poor took off on Monday with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and members of his Council of Ministers giving away the first instalment of grant-in-aid to the beneficiary families simultaneously in all 33 districts of the State. Mr. Gehlot, accompanied by Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Jairam Ramesh, attended the functions held in the districts of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner on the first day.

The initiative, Mukhya Mantri Grameen BPL Awas Yojana, a Rs.3,400-crore scheme to build 10 lakh houses in the next three years, was formally launched by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi during her visit to Banswara on June 3. The State has taken a loan of Rs.3,400 crore from HUDCO for the purpose.

Speaking at Pokhran in Jaisalmer on the occasion, Mr. Gehlot said the present scheme offers 10 to 100 times more houses in the villages

than those built under various existing schemes. "Earlier it used to be two to three houses per village but under the new scheme the number would be 50 to 100 houses," he noted, adding that rural development has entered a new era in the desert State with the scheme.

## Special focus

Talking about other schemes, Mr. Gehlot said the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is providing employment as well as self-respect to people. Because of the special focus on the employment scheme by the State Government, Rajasthan got Rs.9,000 crore under the scheme in the last two and half years, he informed, adding that the Centre would be providing Right to Food to the citizens soon but expressed the wish that the Right to Shelter Act too

followed.

Mr. Ramesh, who congratulated Mr. Gehlot for the Mukhya Mantri Grameen BPL Awas Yojana, said it was the poor people's right to get housing. He noted that Rajasthan would be the first State to provide housing facility to all BPL households in the next three years. This historic scheme would be a role model for other States, he added.

## Various problems

Mr. Ramesh noted that Rajasthan faces various problems including a desert terrain and scarcity of water.

For resolving the drinking water problem an amount of Rs.2,500 crore has been set aside out of which Rs.1,000 crore is the State Government's share. Mr. Ramesh promised all possible help for solution of drinking water problem in the State.

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• 'Rajasthan will provide housing facility to all BPL households in the next three years'