

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF FINANCE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.822
TO BE ANSWERED ON FEBRUARY 7, 2022

ECONOMIC DISPARITY

822. SHRI DEEPAK BAIJ:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the economic disparity has gone up in the country during the period of Covid-19 pandemic and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the number of people who have fallen below poverty line in the country during this period;
- (c) the details and the number of people who have become new billionaires in the country during the last two years; and
- (d) whether the Government policies have led to a wide gap between the rich and poor in the country and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE
(SHRI PANKAJ CHAUDHARY)

(a) to (d) To supplement its existing developmental schemes, Government made several targeted interventions to mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic on the lives and livelihoods of the people, particularly the vulnerable sections of the society. Some of the key initiatives taken in this regard are listed below.

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY): In March 2020, Government announced a Rs.1.70 lakh crore relief package under the “Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana” (PMGKY). Some components of the package include:

- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):** PMGKAY was announced for all beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) covering around 80 Crore persons for providing additional 5 kg of foodgrains (Wheat or Rice) per beneficiary per month and 1 kg of pulses per NFSA household, free of cost for a period of 8 months (April-November 2020), over and above their NFSA entitlements. In 2021, PM-GKAY benefits were announced for a period of two months i.e., May 2021 and June 2021 for free distribution of 5 kg of rice and wheat free of cost to 80 crore NFSA beneficiaries over and above their NFSA entitlements. This was extended for further period of five months up to November, 2021. In view of the prevailing situation in the country due to Covid-19, the scheme has been further extended for further period of four months i.e. from December, 2021 to March, 2022.
- **Food allocation for migrant workers:** Government allocated a total quantity of about 8 Lakh MT of foodgrains to all States/UTs under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Scheme to help mitigate the food-security requirements of migrant/stranded migrants across the country. This scheme specially provided to cover all such persons who were neither covered under

the National Food Security Act nor under any other State public distribution system (PDS) scheme or were not able to access PDS foodgrains for any reason, during the unprecedented COVID-19 situation, 5 kg foodgrains per person per month were to be provided free of cost under the programme to eligible beneficiaries identified by the State governments during May-June 2020.

2. Other measures under PMGKY:

- Insurance cover of Rs 50 Lakh per health worker fighting COVID-19.
- 20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders given Rs 500 per month for three months.
- Increase in Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) wage to Rs 202 a day from Rs 182 to benefit 13.62 crore families.
- An ex-gratia of Rs 1,000 to 3 crore poor senior citizens, poor widows and poor disabled provided.
- Government front-loaded Rs 2,000 paid to farmers in first week of April 2020 under existing PM Kisan Yojana to benefit 8.7 crore farmers
- Building and Construction Workers Welfare Fund to be used by the Government to provide relief to Construction Workers
- Three free of cost LPG cylinders to 8 crore beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana (PMUY) for three months w.e.f. 01.04.2020 was provided. Cash advances were transferred to the bank account of the beneficiaries. The Scheme was extended till September 30, 2020 for those beneficiaries who have been credited with the advance for buying first/Second cylinder, but not able to buy the cylinders till 30th June 2020.
- Wage-earners, earning below Rs 15,000 per month, in businesses having less than 100 workers, were provided twenty-four percent of the monthly wages into their provident fund accounts, for three months to prevent disruption in their employment. The scheme was extended for another three months, till August 2020.
- Limit of collateral free lending was increased from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 20 lakhs for women organized through 63 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs), thereby supporting 6.85 crore households.
- Employees' Provident Fund Regulations was amended to include Pandemic as the reason to allow non-refundable advance of 75 percent of the amount or three months of the wages, whichever is lower, from the accounts of the employees.

3. Other Programmes

Various targeted schemes aiming to improve the quality of life of the people and reduce poverty in the country were already underway even before the pandemic. These include Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), National Health Mission (NHM), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Atal Pension Yojana, Aspirational Districts Programme, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Mandhan Yojana, Stand Up India Scheme, Skill India Mission, Start Up India Scheme, One nation one ration card scheme, Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Man-dhan yojana, PM Mudra Yojana, Ayushman Bharat Scheme, AMRUT Scheme, Sansad Adharsh Gram Yojana.
