

PRESS RELEASE

April 20, 2016

Shri Randeep Singh Surjewala, Incharge Communications, AICC has issued the following statement to the press today:-

"A grave agrarian and drinking water crisis plagues nearly 40% of India's population today. Over 33 crore people in 2,55,000 villages in 10 States of India are reeling under severe drought. If we add States of Bihar, Uttarakhand and Gujarat, which are also facing drought like conditions, India's population affected by agrarian and water crisis is nearly 48.27 crores in 3,00,000 villages encompassing 300 districts i.e. almost 50% of India's 6,38,000 villages and 688 districts.

Drinking water and irrigation crisis has reached even a larger magnitude. India's 91 biggest reservoirs have only close to 40% of their water storage capacity remaining i.e. 36 bcm (billion cubic metre) out of total capacity of about 158 bcm. Worst are the reservoirs in South and West India. 31 big reservoirs in the South Indian States of Andhra/Telangana/Karnataka/Kerala/Tamilnadu have barely 15% of the normal water storage capacity. 27 reservoirs in Maharashtra/Gujarat have barely 18% of the normal water storage capacity. In fact, water capacity in Maharashtra's reservoirs is down to 10% to 14% of their capacity.

Rural distress has been accentuated manifold on account of systematic undermining of MGNAREGA by Modi government. This can be gauged from the fact that in the year 2015-16, only 1.8% households covered by MGNAREGA got 150 days of employment in the 10 drought-hit States. Even for the year 2016-17, Modi government has already reduced the MGNAREGA demand by 980 million person days by curtailing the approved labour budget to 2.17 billion person days as against the demand by States of 3.15 billion person days. Apathy of Modi government to MGNAREGA demand is evident from the fact that arrears of Rs.12,230 crore for work done in 2015-16 under MGNAREGA have been released in April, 2016.

Modi government even reduced the Rural Drinking Water budget from Rs.9190 crore in 2014-15 to Rs.5,000 crore in 2016-17.

Rural crisis can be gauged from the fact the agriculture growth rate is down to 0.2% from 3.7% in 2014-15 under UPA government. Even the spate of farmer's suicides has increased to an average of 52 deaths per day.

Resultant effect is large scale migration, farmer's suicides, drinking water rationing, food shortages and a huge rural crisis. Modi government is, however, completely oblivious to the crisis and has only responded after Supreme Court of India has intervened in the matter and is issuing day-to-day instructions to deal with the drought conditions. This by itself reflects complete abdication of duty by Modi government.

Indian National Congress demands that Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi and government should rise from its slumber and fulfill its duty towards people of India by immediately undertaking the following:-

1. MGNAREGA work should be immediately made available in all the 3,00,000 villages spreading over 300 districts and 13 States of the country; and
2. National Food Security Act should be implemented without delay by Centre/State governments in all the 13 States with Government of India providing the necessary provision including providing foodgrains; and
3. Special provision for mid-day scheme and meals for children in anganwadis be ensured; and

4. Emergent provision for everyday supply of drinking water be ensured; and
5. Monetary allocation from National Calamity Relief Fund and other similar schemes be immediately be made to tide over the drought; and
6. Prime Minister must call a meeting of all the Chief Ministers of drought affected States and provide all assistance necessary to tide over the alarming condition.

We take this opportunity to once again remind Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi of his 'rajdharma'.”