

## Draft Minutes of the Meeting with the Chief Secretary and other State Secretaries

20<sup>th</sup> October, 2009

Srinagar, J and K

The Chief Secretary welcomed Mr. Harsh Mander, and his colleague Mr. Tanveer Ahmad Dar, and expressed his commitment towards implementing the food, social security and livelihood schemes in the spirit of the orders of the Supreme Court. He also mentioned the limitations and challenges faced in the state, such as the lack of the panchayat system for helping in decentralisation in the implementation of schemes. He hoped that the panchayat elections would now take place within six months.

The Chief Secretary also proposed to the State secretaries who are concerned with the implementation of the food schemes that they should conduct the in-house reviews of these schemes every month, and he would personally undertake such reviews.

Thereafter there was a discussion on the implementation of the food schemes monitored by the Supreme Court, based primarily on a field study undertaken by the Commissioners' office with the collaboration of the Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir. The points raised and agreements by the Chief Secretary and other secretaries are summarised below:

### **Integrated Child Development Services:**

1. The Supreme Court in its orders dated 28 November 2001 and 13 December 2006 has directed all state government to ensure that every hamlet is covered by an anganwadi centre. Further the current norms of the Government of India provide for one anganwadi for every 800 population. However, about 12% of the respondents reported in the survey that there is no anganwadi in their habitation. On this, the Social Welfare Secretary agreed that there are some hamlets left uncovered, but the AWC on demand have been institutionalised to cover those hamlets as well. Mr Mander requested that the state government proactively identifies the hamlets and slums which are still uncovered, and plan for their time bound full coverage.

2. About 30% of the respondents in the survey had reported that the anganwadi centre in their village does not open everyday. Further it was found that even where the anganwadi centres are opened regularly, it is usually only the anganwadi helper who is present, and the anganwadi worker only visited occasionally. Mr Mander requested the government to kindly issue strict instructions, and to strengthen the monitoring mechanisms, to ensure that the AWCs open regularly and all the anganwadi workers are present at the AWCs regularly.
3. The survey confirmed that even when centres open, there are very few activities apart from SNP, and even this supply is erratic. People confirmed that no nutrition counselling is actually taking place under ICDS. Home visits are not being made by the AWW for creating awareness among the beneficiaries, motivating them to attend the AWC and other health and nutrition related issues. Growth monitoring does not take place and therefore, it can assumed that the malnourished children are not either being followed up, or referred to nearest govt, hospital and given double rations. The government assured that it would address this.
4. In many villages, local AWW's have not being appointed and the AWW's appointed have to come from other districts, which is not viable financially for the AWW to attend the AWC regularly. Therefore, the Chief Secretary directed that a survey will be undertaken to find out how many AWWs appointed do not belong to the same village/hamlet where AWC is located and thereafter replacements/deployments and new appointments will be undertaken to ensure that the AWWs are from local area only. Chief Secretary directed that in future, all appointments should be made only of AWWs and AWHs who are residents of the same hamlet, and they should be replaced if they shift residence outside that hamlet. .One major reason for the disruption of supply of SNP noted in the survey was explained in the meeting to be that the Department of Social Welfare procures all the supplies centrally at the district level and this is then supplied to the villages. This contravenes, in letter and spirit, the numerous orders of the Supreme Court which stress on the decentralisation of the procurement and preparation of SNP. Except perhaps in a few remote scheduled tribal hamlets where availability of food grains at the local level may be a problem, it was agreed that a decentralised procurement and food preparation system can very easily be put in place across J&K, with women's societies in village communities being given this responsibility. Wherever this has been undertaken, we find that the ownership of the ICDS scheme has gone up

tremendously. Therefore, the State will formulate an action plan to take the procurement of food items under SNP to the village level within a time bound manner and Mahilla Mandals or SHGs will be given the responsibility for this.

5. In the survey more than half of 50 percent of the respondents reported pre-school activities are not being carried out in the AWCs. The Chief Secretary agreed that the State would formulate an action plan on how the pre-schools activities would be conducted in the ICDS centres regularly. As the education department is also introducing pre-schooling and this overlaps with the ICDS pre-schooling, the Chief Secretary proposed that the Education and Social Welfare Secretaries should decide on it and take a call on which department would take responsibility including specifying the age groups for pre-schooling under ICDS and SSA.
6. It was agreed that for appointments of anganwadi helpers, single women (widows, half-widows, divorcees, separated) would be given first priority in selection, and only when there are none who qualify in any hamlet would other women be considered.
7. Many AWWs reported in the survey that they were trained only once at the time of recruitment. Therefore, they are likely to be unaware of the new developments in the scheme. Therefore, it was agreed that the training centres for AWWs will be revamped. The Chief Secretary proposed the training centres should be more decentralised. Reputed NGOs with appropriate technical knowledge can also be contacted and can provide help in this.
8. Further, the infrastructure in the centres also seem to be very poor with almost 80% of the anganwadi centres visited in the survey running from the homes of either the anganwadi worker or the anganwadi helper; only two anganwadis had drug kits available; only 55.6% of the anganwadis had playing equipments and only 64.8% AWCs had weighing scales available. The Social Welfare Secretary mentioned that there are only a few hundred AWCs which have their own buildings. Mr Harsh Mander proposed that the State should explore making these buildings in convergence with programmes like NREGA.
9. The State government confirmed that it has already taken initiative to make documents, reports and all the information related to the ICDS available on the website. This has also been directed

by the Supreme Court in order dated Oct 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Mr Mander requested government to kindly speed up the process and apprise us about the progress in this.

10. The Chief Secretary also proposed to the Secretary Social Welfare that he should see the feasibility of a team lead by him to visit Maharashtra for studying the reforms in ICDS, as proposed by Mr Mander.

### Mid day Meal Scheme:

11. Mr Mander pointed out that for 2007-08, the coverage of the children is 95 percent under MDMS. However, the off take of food grains allocated for MDM is reported by government to be only 59.1 percent. This discrepancy may indicate that either the sufficient quantity of the meal is not being served or that the attendance is being fudged. Also the state has been able to utilise only 49 percent of the available budget (centre and state) for the cooking costs of meal, which points to the fact that the quality of the meal is greatly compromised. The Chief Secretary agreed that this was a serious matter, and promised to enquire and ensure that MDM of prescribed standard is actually supplied on all school days in all eligible schools.
12. During the field visit by Mr Mander to two villages in Baramulla and feedback from many villages, children confirmed that the school meals are not being served throughout this year. The food grains allocated under MDM are being rationed under PDS. The Chief Secretary directed the Secretary Education that the MDM has a separate allocation from the Centre and therefore, the grain allocated for the MDM should not be used in the PDS. Therefore, it was agreed that the MDM will be started again immediately. Mr Mander pointed out that about 13% of the respondents in the survey had also reported that the meal was not regularly served and a large majority (~70%) complained that the meal was not being given on Fridays. The discussions with the respondents revealed many other aspects connected with irregular serving of mid day meal in the schools. There were complaints of irregularity or disruption in mid day meals from many villages. The Education Secretary said that there are only few FCI godowns available which results in the disruptions in the supply. The Chief Secretary directed that the Education and CAPD Secretaries should jointly issue a circular within a month that the foodgrain supplies must be regularly available on time to the schools for the preparation of meals. He said that to avoid

disruptions in the serving of the meal, money (cooking cost) can be allocated to the schools in advance in a way that at any given point the school has the required funds for serving the meal for a period of at least three months. Opening of bank accounts in the name of Village Education Committee could also be considered as this will increase the accountability to the community.

13. About 10% of the children reported in the survey that the quantity of the meals served was not sufficient. About 30% of the children also felt that the quality of the meal was not good and 15 percent said there was no varied menu for the Mid Day Meal. Mr Mander directed that this must be looked into. The quantity of the meal should be increased and quality improved: the menu should be fixed for each day and the students should know which recipe would be served on each day in advance. Mr Mander suggested that the State government should also consider including eggs, as is being done in some states, or cheese or meat as is culturally appropriate, in the menu. However, the Education Secretary said that there are resource constraints and cannot be managed under the present budget. He further mentioned that the department is taking up this with the MoHRD.
14. Mr Mander expressed worry that there is a high burden on teachers in organising MDM, and teaching is suffering. The survey results show that the teachers are fully involved in the preparation of the meals, which affects the education of the students. Almost 76 percent respondents reported that teachers are involved in the organizing, procuring raw materials and cooking of the mid day meal. Further about 80% of the teachers said that they give up to one hour of their time everyday for the mid day meal while the rest gave even more. Mr Mander suggested that the State government should consider empowering VECs for this, or women's committees, or the appointing one additional staff for the mid day meal in the schools as done by in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. The Chief Secretary agreed that the procurement of food items for MDM would be given to the Mahila Mandals and the VECs would take charge of supervision and monitoring.
15. Mr Mander suggested that the infrastructure for the mid day meal also needs improvement. About a third of the schools visited had no drinking water facilities; a third did not provide plates

to the students. The Chief Secretary agreed that schools with no drinking water facilities will be identified and a time bound action plan to extend the provisions of safe drinking water to these schools would be implemented with the help of PHE department. The Education Secretary also mentioned that the department is also exploring of introducing water purifiers in the schools with the help of PHE department.

16. Further, it has been noticed in the survey that the Zonal Education Officers procure all the cooking utensils including gas stove, cylinder and containers centrally at the zone level and then the utensils are supplied to the schools. The centralized procurements provide opportunity of money being siphoned away and therefore, any such procurement must happen at the school level by the school staff and village education committee. The Chief Secretary ordered that such procurement must be decentralised and made transparent, and happen through VECs.

### Public Distribution System:

17. Mr Mander pointed out that the survey and his own field visits revealed that there is no proper identifying mechanism for the BPL and AAY. The state is not using the survey administered by the MoRD for identifying BPL for purposes of issuing BPL and AAY ration cards. In the villages he visited, the Namardar mentioned that he is being told to prepare a list of BPL and AAY families every year by the Patwari , but the final list is being decided by the patwari only and not in consultation with him or the people of the village. People also claimed that the list that the Namardar prepares in not being also prepared with any consultation with the people and therefore, any such list always excludes many poor, though deserving, from the BPL and AAY category. In brief, people of the village do not have any say in finalising the list of the BPL and AAY categories in their own villages. Mr Mander directed that in a state like J and K where panchayats have not been functional from two decades, the government should necessarily evolve a mechanism of engaging the people in finalising BPL/AAY and any such list of their own villages.
18. Since the State is using CAPD survey for the BPL list under PDS and MoRD BPL survey for social welfare schemes there are mismatches in the two surveys. Therefore, Mr. Mander proposed that the MoRD BPL survey should be followed by all departments, so that there is no arbitrariness and confusion by multiple lists. The Chief Secretary agreed that this will be done.

19. Mr. Mander said and the CS agreed that in distributing the AAY ration cards the state shall comply with the Supreme Court dated 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2003 which states that all households belonging to six "priority groups" would be entitled to Antyodaya cards. More precisely, the Government of India was directed "to place on AAY category the following groups of persons:

(1) Aged, infirm, disabled, destitute men and women, pregnant and lactating women, destitute women;

(2) widows and other single women with no regular support;

(3) old persons (aged 60 or above) with no regular support and no assured means of subsistence;

(4) households with a disabled adult and assured means of subsistence;

(5) households where due to old age, lack of physical or mental fitness, social customs, need to care for a disabled, or other reasons, no adult member is available to engage in gainful employment outside the house;

(6) primitive tribes."

20. Mr. Mander further said that if the widows do not have a BPL ration card, they are in practice barred from the entitlements of any pension and other benefits which are to be extended to only BPL and AAY families. He said there should be a drive in the state to cover all widows, half widows and single women with ration cards. The CAPD and Social Welfare Secretaries mentioned that they have already written to the nodal agencies to tie up with the District Social welfare officers for the widows list and issue AAY cards to all those who are not been covered under AAY. Mr Mander requested a report on full compliance in three months.

21. Mr Mander said that one of the reasons for the relative success of the PDS in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, compared with other schemes, seems to be that the fact that the ration shops are controlled by the state government with the PDS shops (nodal distribution centers) being run by government directly, rather than by private dealers, as seen in most parts of the country. However, it was learnt that the state government has recently decided to privatize the system by handing over the running of fair price shops to private dealers on a commission basis.

The CAPD Secretary mentioned that they have found substantial leakages in the FPS shops (commission based shops) and therefore, they have stopped issuing licences to the new FPS shops and internal arrangements are being made now whereby 2 to 3 more outlets in different villages are being affiliated to one main ration shop and the ration shop keeper, who is a govt. employee, distributes ration separately on different outlets on different days. He further mentioned that the department is formulating a policy to phase out all privately managed FPS shops.

The Chief Secretary mentioned that he had also experimented the idea of internal arrangements and establishing a few more outlets attached to one main ration shop in Ladakh during his tenure as Deputy Commissioner and had found that it was working well.

It was then agreed that the internal arrangements will be done and many outlets will be established but the particular timings of opening of each such outlet will be displayed on each outlet so that people would know when the outlet has to be opened.

22. It was also discussed that once the Panchayat system is in place they can also be given the responsibility of running the PDS shops.
23. Mr Mander said the survey also found that the records in the ration shop were not maintained properly. There was no public display of all the information related to the PDS in more than 85% of the ration shops visited. The entries in the ration cards were not properly maintained and the recall of the beneficiaries and the entry made in the distribution register did not always match. Only 50% of the respondents said that the ration shop was open everyday. In the villages visited by Mr Mander, people complained that the ration shop was opened only one day a month. Further almost 80% of the respondents reported paying a higher price of 50p. to Re.1 per kg. than what was declared by the state as the issue price. In order to rectify these gaps in the implementation of the PDS in the state, Mr Mander directed that the state government issue strict instructions to all the ration shops to open on all working days, and to publicly display information such as timings of opening of the ration shop, details of stocks, card holder names

and food grain entitlements. Further they must also be instructed to make available all records for public scrutiny. The government should create a website and consider putting all record, documents and monthly progress report down to each PDS shop online regularly. The state government should also constitute vigilance committees in all the villages to monitor the functioning of ration shops in their villages. The details of stocks, allotment order, list of beneficiaries etc. should be made available to this committee. States like Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh have already put such transparency measures in place and it should not be difficult for J&K to do so.

The CAPD secretary reckoned that we have issued strict instructions on displaying the timings of opening of ration shops, card holder names, specific entitlements, issue prices etc and will be reiterated again.

24. Mr Mander said he had also noticed in the field visit that the entries, specifying the amount paid and the quantity given, are not being made on the ration card. Therefore, any attempt to monitor the delivery of services and transparency is likely to be mislead. The CAPD secretary also mentioned that the department have also instructed that entries must be made in the ration card and will again be reiterated.
25. To increase transparency and accountability the different entitlements to different categories of people with prescribed rates, as well as authorities with telephone numbers and address for lodging complaints should be written on each ration card. The entries should be clearly marked in the ration card every month with readable dates, quantity of food grains lifted, and the amount paid. A toll free helpline number should be made available to lodge complaints and the complaints should be disposed immediately. The CAPD secretary ensured that it would be done on the new rations cards being printed.

Media has reported many instances of rice scam in the valley (attached). Therefore, the state should devise an effective model of monitoring the ration flow from the level of import to the delivery to people. Chattisgarh government has done this and have proved very useful. Mr

Mander suggested that the entire model of PDS reforms initiated by Chattisgarh government should be explored with a field visit of state officials, and Chief Secretary agreed.

26. Mr Mander pointed out that two-thirds of the respondents in the survey complained that rations were not available to them in installments. The Supreme Court order dated 2<sup>nd</sup> May,2003 directed that "arrangements must be made to permit the BPL household to buy the ration in installments"

In this connection, the Secretary CAPD raised the concern that there is only one coupon provided in the ration card for each month and therefore, the rations provided on instalment basis would not be possible. However, the Chief Secretary suggested that some kind of arrangement has to be made in ration cards which would allow beneficiaries lifting their quota of ration in instalments.

#### **National Maternity Benefit Scheme:**

24. For the year 2007-08, the total number of home deliveries were 46846 and out of which only 530 women have been given any benefit under NMBS component of JSY, which amounts to just 1.1 percent coverage. Mr Mander said that this clearly shows that the scheme is almost non functional in the state, as also confirmed in the survey. The feedback from the ground also reveals that the nodal agencies of this scheme are confused about the guidelines of the scheme and feel that providing benefit for the home deliveries will incentivise and will increase the population. The fact that the JSY scheme is no way different from the NMBS in this regard. The results of the survey with respect to the functioning of the NMBS/JSY scheme are very disappointing. Only 6.3% of the eligible beneficiaries reported getting any benefit under the NMBS/JSY schemes. Out of 143 women who had institutional deliveries only 9 women and only 4 out of 60 women (BPL) who had home deliveries have been given benefit under the scheme. Further, of the 9 women who had institutional deliveries; 5 reported getting only Rs. 500 as benefit whereas they should have got Rs. 1400. Women who applied for benefit and were rejected were given reasons such as not being BPL (although they had an institutional delivery and therefore are eligible for the beneficiary since Jammu and Kashmir is a Low Performing State, according to JSY guidelines); having more than two children (the Supreme Court order of November 2007 clearly states that there should be no restriction on the number of children for

a woman to be eligible for benefit under NMBS); having a home delivery (again the Supreme Court has repeatedly clarified that Rs. 500 should be given irrespective of place of delivery) and lack of funds. All these reasons indicate that the state government has not given priority to this scheme and the provisions under this scheme have not been adequately conveyed to the district and PHC levels. We request the state government to immediately inform all the districts and PHCs about the provisions under the scheme, including the fact that there is no restriction on age, place of delivery or number of children to receive a benefit under the scheme. It seems as if the scheme has still not taken off in the state in spite of repeated orders from the Supreme Court and the high priority given to it under the National Rural Health Mission.

25. The Secretary Health and Family Welfare acknowledged the fact that the scheme had been discontinued for last two years due to substantial leakages and now from January 2009, the scheme had been resumed and have been disbursing benefits to the beneficiaries. Chief Secretary agreed that this was not a satisfactory step to simply stop the scheme, and directed that it should be implemented with full vigour and vigilance. The Secretary further mentioned that both the institutional and non institutional deliveries are being covered and given benefits under NMBS/JSY. The Chief Secretary mentioned that in Jammu districts the scheme is doing very well. We need to put life into the scheme and hold the Directors accountable for this. It was also agreed that the details of NMBS and JSY schemes must be pasted on all Panchayat buildings, ICDS centres, public health centres, public health sub-centres, and block & district hospitals. Further, a regularly updated list of selected and rejected applicants should be displayed quarterly at the Panchayat Bhavan/ any nominated place and ICDS centres. This should be pegged on the themes of nutritional education, and promoting intra family equity in food and health rights.

### **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme:**

It has been over a year since the National Old Age Pension Scheme has been extended to cover all old people above 65 years and below the poverty line. However Mr Mander pointed out that the results of the survey show that this expansion is yet to take place in the ground level. Of the eligible people who were interviewed almost 65% were not receiving any pensions. Further

almost 90% of those getting pensions were getting Rs. 200 or less as pension per month, with the rest getting Rs. 325 per month. With the enhanced scheme (Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme) in operation since November 2007, we request the state government to take immediate steps to cover all the old people who are BPL under the pension scheme and to also enhance the pension amount to Rs. 400 as the contribution of the Government of India has been increased to Rs. 200 per person per month. The Secretary Social Welfare mentioned that they require extra allocation of funds to universalise the pensions among all the old people who are above 65 years and BPL and the department will put proposals into the ministry.

26. Mr. Mander said that many eligible old people have been left out of BPL lists, therefore they need to be included under a special drive to make them eligible for the universalised pension scheme for all the old people who are above 65 years and BPL.

27. Mr Mander said that the survey showed that the delivery of pension does not happen on time. The Supreme Court has directed that the pension shall reach to the beneficiaries by 7<sup>th</sup> of each month. The state has established a policy of depositing the pensions into the bank accounts of beneficiaries only quarterly which also gets delayed. Due to small network of J and K bank branches the beneficiaries, who though are very old, have to travel long distances for collecting the pension. This also gets aggravated because of the fact that the exact dates when pension gets deposited are not confirmed and therefore, the old beneficiaries have to make repeated visits to the Bank. Many people confirmed that pensions are being paid only on two Eids in a year. This is very regrettable, because pensions are often their lifeline. They also reported illegal cuts when bulk payments are made. Almost 30% of the respondents reported having to travel long distances to get the pension and also many complained that when went to the bank once in three months, the pension was not yet deposited. Further, there were complaints of the banks allowing the pensioners to withdraw their money only on a fixed day leading to overcrowding and long waits. Mr. Mander suggested that the State Government should send instructions to the banks to allow the old people to withdraw their pension money on any day of the month, as other customers of the bank can do, and not necessarily on one day of a month or a quarter. This should be written clearly on the entitlement card (pass book) and should also be displayed on a notice board in each bank where pension is being distributed.

The Secretary mentioned that the funds under NOAPS are delayed. However, the scheme is being implemented in convergence with the state social security scheme ISSS under which funds are available on time. Therefore, it was discussed that the funds could be disbursed to the banks in advance from the budget of ISSS and if the pension amount for any month is not being deposited by the State government before a specified disbursing date, the branch managers would enjoy authority to pay the pensions to the beneficiaries from the advances as a credit to the government which has to be settled once the funds under NOAPS are available. The Secretary committed sorting out the payment system within 4 months. Chief Secretary directed that arrangements should be made for issue of pensions every month, even in anticipation of allotments if necessary, as happens for salaries and pensions of government servants.

28. Mr. Mander also proposed to look into the A.P model which ensures that payments are made on without fail on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month and at easy access in every village. The Secretary Social Welfare agreed that the A.P model will be studied and they will attempt to emulate it. Regarding the days of payment it was also agreed that initially one day in a month will be declared for disbursing the pensions to all the beneficiaries and all the nodal agencies will be geared up to ensure that the payments are made on this day of each month. The Chief Secretary proposed to start the process in few districts and then cover the other districts within a time bound manner.

29. Regarding the transparency measures, the amount of pension and age of the person should be clearly written on the entitlement cards (pass books) of the old people with clearly marked entries in the pass book with details of dates and amount withdrawn. The Secretary also mentioned that the department have sorted out the problems and are putting up the broad bands in place to ensure that the names of the beneficiaries are put on the website.

### **National Family Benefit Scheme:**

30. Mr Mander said that the general feedback about the scheme is that people are not aware of the scheme. Of the eligible beneficiaries identified in the survey, 92% reported not getting any benefit under the NFBS. Even the few people who received the cash benefit received this

amount at least a year or a more after the death of bread winner. He said it is unfortunate that the National Family Benefit Scheme which provides a small support to poor families at a difficult time, seems to be almost non-functional in the state. He urged the state government to take this scheme seriously and ensure that it is implemented according to the guidelines of the scheme and the orders of the Supreme Court.

31. He suggested and the Chief Secretary agreed that the state government should put in place a proper and transparent procedure to identify beneficiaries for this scheme. The procedure for application for benefit under the scheme must be simplified. The payment (by cheque) should be made immediately within a period of one month of the death and should be delivered at home of beneficiaries. As the State government receives a consolidated amount from Government of India under NSAP to be spent on NOAPS and NFBS, therefore, the State government should make clear allocation separately for both schemes based on the estimates and ensure that all the money allocated for NFBS is spent under this scheme and not diverted to IGNOAPS or any other State scheme. The State government must regularly advertise the provisions of the scheme on All India Radio and Doordarshan at primetime so that the beneficiaries may become aware of. The details of scheme must be pasted on all Panchayat buildings, ICDS centres, public health centres, public health sub-centres, block & district hospitals and block development offices. Further, a regularly updated list of selected and rejected applicants should be displayed quarterly at the Panchayat Bhavan/ any nominate place in village and ICDS centres.

### **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/JKREGS:**

Mr Mander regretted that in 2007-08, the programme has generated only 7 days of work per rural household. Also, though the NREGS guarantees 100 days of employment for each rural household, in 2007-08 there have been only 1.4 percent of rural households which have completed 100 days of employment under NREGS. He said that the results of the survey on the rural employment scheme are also discouraging. There is low level of awareness about the provisions of JKREGS and how to demand work, among the general masses. We further recommend that a campaign be launched to make people aware and issue job cards and to include women under JKREGS. People have not been provided job cards, as also reflected in the

survey and it was difficult to find five persons with job cards in many of the villages surveyed. Mr Mander found that in Hartrath people of village said that they have not been given job cards even though they had applied for it few months back. The survey had also revealed the fact that jobs cards have not been issued to the most people. The Secretary assured that this year substantial part of the funds has been spent already under the JKREGS and job cards are being issued speedily. In some backward districts, he said that the scheme has been doing well.

32. Mr Mander appreciated that the daily wages under JKREGA have been increased to a more realistic 110 Rs per day, and expected that it will certainly increase the demand for work. This was reflected during his field visit and people in both the villages: Hartrath and Arampora, showed a strong desire of working under JKREGS for the present wages and feel that the wages of 110 per days. They said that this is much better than 150 to 200 per day which they get in Srinagar for construction work, as work there is uncertain and distant.
33. Therefore, the CS agreed that the systems under JKREGS will be geared up to ensure that the job cards are issued and work is made available to the people on demand under JKREGS within a maximum period of 14 days of making the demand, as prescribed under the scheme. The state government assured that it would take further steps to ensure that the wages are strictly paid on time, as prescribed under JKREGS, work is provided on demand and within the time frame, attendance is marked on the muster roll and worksites facilities including shades, safe drinking water, first aid and crèches for children under six are be made available on each worksite under JKREGS.

Mr Mander suggested that the work should also be made available in the winter which is a off season for the employment for daily wage workers and it would have a large impact in controlling the migration of the people to Punjab and Himachal Pradesh during the winters. The JKREGS in the state has not been able to provide employment during the winters which is off season of employment for daily wage workers. The Chief Secretary confirmed that it is important that work should be made available during this period and the department should formulate the area specific plans of work that could be undertaken during winter. Therefore, it was agreed that the department would be listing some tasks that could be undertaken during

winter. The Secretary Social Welfare proposed that the snow cleaning and protection works can be undertaken during this period. The snow cleaning has already been discussed with the Ministry of Rural Development, GoI and piloted in one area.

34. As there are no panchayats in the State, therefore, Mr Mander suggested that the State government should strictly make it mandatory for each VLW to organize the meeting of the village community once in three month for formulating plans and their implementation under JKREGS in the State. The village level worker should also visit each village in his list for a full day not less than once every week. The date and the place where village level worker could be approached by the community should be intimated to them in advance since there are no panchayat premises in the most villages of J&K which could have been used for this. The CS agreed to this.
35. Mr Mander also suggested that creation of water harvesting structures in rainfed areas is a great opportunity in the State that can be explored to make work available under JKREGS, as a higher percentage of agriculture in the State is dependent on rainwater availability and this as high as 84 percent in Jammu division. This would be also useful for the State to increase the water availability for the agriculture which will lead to increase the production of food grains and would also serve as an incentive to the farmers to work under JKREGS.
36. To ensure greater transparency and accountability, he suggested that the State government must institutionalize the social audit under JKREGS and for other food schemes. This is a provision though provided under NREGA but has not translated into reality and practice. The Secretary mentioned that the Social audit rules have been framed and people have been trained on this and accordingly social audits are being conducted.
37. The CS said that Government of India has already notified that NREGS funds can also be used for land development activities in the private lands of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes and Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. This provides an unique opportunity to create durable assets in the private lands of vulnerable groups and is likely to lead to an increase in productivity of these lands in the long run.

## Overall:

38. Mr Mander suggested that there is an urgent need to implement Supreme Court orders on grievance redressal.
39. He also directed that a drive be conducted by the state government to ensure that all widows and half-widows be covered within 3 months with pensions and AAY cards, to reduce their great distress.

The meet ended with both the CS and Mr Mander thanking each other for a very constructive meeting, and hoped that this would spur many improvements in the functioning of food, social security and livelihoods programs in J and K.

## Frontpage

### CB unearths rice import scam

'250 FCI Trucks Skip Toll Post To Enter Valley In 2008'

GK NEWS NETWORK

Srinagar, May 31: The Crime Branch of Jammu and Kashmir Police have unearthed a massive scandal in the import of foodgrains by the Food Corporation of India for public distribution in the valley. After registering a case Sunday vide FIR No 17/2009, the elite agency has launched vigorous investigation into the scam. It carried out raids at various offices and seized records. Some arrests are likely shortly.

Sources told Greater Kashmir the CB sleuths carried out random verification of records at the Lower Munda toll post during 2008 to ascertain the number of trucks laden with FCI rice that had entered the valley between January 1 and December 31, 2008.

"Of the 480 trucks known to have made it to the valley, no less than 250 did not figure in the Toll Post records suggesting that these had not crossed the facility monitoring all the incoming and outgoing vehicles," they said, that the underlying suspicion was that no less than 23,000 quintals of rice had allegedly been misappropriated, assuming that every truck carried over 90 quintals of foodgrains.

Curiously, the scrutiny of FCI reveals that all the 450 rice-laden trucks have allegedly been shown as received in the valley. "The discrepancy has been detected in last year's records and the possibility of the clandestine operation having been going on for years past cannot be ruled out," the sources said, adding that various officials of the Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution Department might well be involved in the huge scandal.

## News

### Govt to monitor FCI food grains movement

Multi-disciplinary teams to scan trucks at Lower Munda, Rajbagh

SAMAAN LATEEF

Srinagar, July 9: Jammu and Kashmir government has put in place a mechanism to monitor the movement of Food Corporation of India food grains in the state. Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Committees comprising representatives from the FCI, the Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution Department and the Excise and Taxation Department, would be located at the Lower Munda (south Kashmir) and Rajbagh (Kathua) check posts for the purpose.

An order to the effect was issued by the Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution Department here vide government order No 58-CAPD of 2009 on Friday creating an effective mechanism "to monitor the outflow of FCI food grains from Jammu and Punjab. The members of the Committees constituted for location at the two transit points would be deployed on rotational monthly basis.

The Committees, according to the order, would check and monitor the trucks carrying FCI food grains from Jammu and Punjab. After physical verification, the Committees would acknowledge the challan of trucks by affixing stamps. However, these shall not acknowledge the challan if the truck loaded from Jammu reported after four days and from Punjab after six days of loading.

The Committees would maintain proper records with full details on daily basis duly signed by all their members.

Moreover, the order said, the Committees would fax or e-mail daily reports to the concerned divisional commissioner, CAPD secretary and concerned CAPD director and deputy director and the FCI general manager indicating the number of trucks with their registration checked, quantity of food grains loaded on each, date and place of loading / dispatched with intended destination and date of reporting at the check posts.

However, the government modified the order on Monday making it incumbent upon the CAPD deputy director and assistant director of the concerned district to visit the joint check posts, physically verify the stocks and record the same on the challan the reasons for delay before allowing the trucks to proceed further. The senior FCI officials would take action in such delays under rules.

It may be recalled that Greater Kashmir had, on June 1 this year, reported that the Crime Branch of state police had unearthed a rice import scam after finding that 250 FCI trucks had skipped the toll post to enter the valley in 2008. The elite investigating agency had filed an FIR (No 17/2009) and launched a vigorous investigation into the scandal. It had also carried out raids at various offices and seized some records.

The Crime Branch had found that no less than 23,000 quintal rice had allegedly been misappropriated during the clandestine operation.

[http://greaterkashmir.com/today/full\\_story.asp?Date=10\\_7\\_2009&ItemID=113&cat=21](http://greaterkashmir.com/today/full_story.asp?Date=10_7_2009&ItemID=113&cat=21)

CAPD official 'eats' 1500 quintals ration

Locals say store-keeper made scapegoat  
S N HUSSAIN

Kishtwar, Sept 17: A scam involving alleged embezzlement of more than 1500 quintals of

ration has surfaced in the Consumer Affairs & Public Distribution department in the far-flung areas of Marwah Warwan in district Kishtwar.

The scam was unearthed when deputy director, CAPD, Khursheed Ahmed, filed an application with the police at Marwah that more than 1500 quintals of ration has been misappropriated by an official. The police registered a case at police station Marwah under section 409/109 RPC and arrested the accused, Farooq Ahmed of Barnar Kokernag, who works as in-charge store-keeper in the area.

According to the compliant, the official has misappropriated food grains during dispatches to Marwah Warwan area for the year 2008-09. The deputy director has mentioned that the store-keeper received 33577.71 quintals of ration at Inshan Guzer base camp vide receipt no. 2895 but the contractor delivered only 32045.54 quintals in the area. After registration of FIR, police arrested the accused.

Holding a Class-IV employee responsible for such a large-scale embezzlement has, however, raised many eyebrows and the locals say that it was not possible for a petty employee to carry out such an act without the involvement of his superiors.

Pertinently, to carry ration to these far flung areas costs more than the actual price of the food grains, and by misappropriating the ration the officials also cause loss to the state exchequer by withdrawing the carriage money in lakhs of rupees for the ration which otherwise had never been carried to the area.

Deputy director, CAPD, Khursheed Ahmed said the department had also completed its inquiry and now it would be decided whether the department will itself take action against the official involved or the matter is referred to Crime Branch. However, he said that besides the store-keeper, the tehsil supply officer was also involved in the scam.

[http://www.greaterkashmir.com/today/full\\_story.asp?Date=18\\_9\\_2009&ItemID=61&cat=21](http://www.greaterkashmir.com/today/full_story.asp?Date=18_9_2009&ItemID=61&cat=21)