

(d) whether a pilot scheme on smart card based delivery of essential commodities under TPDS has been launched; and

(e) if so, the details in this regard and the time by when this pilot scheme will be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) A conference of Food Secretaries of States and Union Territories (UTs) and other officials on Best Practices and Reforms in Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was held on 12th and 13th July, 2010. In the said conference, it was resolved, among others, to ensure proper identification of beneficiaries, timely distribution of foodgrains, increase viability of Fair Price Shops (FPSs), enhancing storage capacities, use of technology based initiatives in TPDS and increase public awareness.

(d) and (e) To improve quality of delivery of services under TPDS and to assess replicability of new technologies, a pilot scheme on smart card based delivery of TPDS commodities has been approved for Chandigarh and Haryana in December, 2008. Implementing agencies of this scheme are NIC, State Government of Haryana and Chandigarh UT Administration. Under the scheme, the existing ration cards are to be replaced by smart cards. These smart cards will contain bio-metric features of the adult members of the ration card holder families.

As reported by the Administration of Chandigarh UT and Government of Haryana, they have completed trial run of smart card based transaction of TPDS commodities in June, 2010 in their respective States. The pilot scheme was launched in the Conference of Food Secretaries of States and UTs and other officials held on 12th and 13th July, 2010, by issuing smart cards to some TPDS beneficiaries of Haryana.

Use of biometric machine

3396. DR. T. N. SEEMA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the names of States who have implemented Biometric Identification System for targeted public distribution in the country so far;

(b) whether Government has made any analysis of the effectiveness of the Biometric Identification System implemented for public distribution;

(c) whether there is any request from Kerala State Government pending for financial assistance for implementation of Biometric Identification System for PDS in the State; and

(d) if so, the action taken so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (d) Some States/Union Territories (UTs) such as Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Delhi and Chandigarh have taken up implementation of Biometric Identification System for TPDS.

Government has approved implementation of a pilot scheme on Smart Card based delivery of essential commodities under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in Chandigarh Union Territory (UT) and States of Haryana. Under the scheme, the existing ration cards will be replaced by Smart Cards which will have biometric features (fingerprints) of adult members of beneficiary families, based on which verification of genuineness of the beneficiary family will take place and only thereafter the essential commodities will be issued to them from the fair price shops. After implementation of the scheme in pilot States, it will be evaluated so as to assess the cost benefits, suitability of technology and the feasibility of replicability in other States/UTs.

Government of Kerala has recently submitted a proposal for Central financial assistance for implementation of Biometric Identification based Integrated Public Distribution System. After the evaluation of the pilot scheme, it will be considered to be rolled out in other States/UTs, including the State of Kerala.

Expansion of coverage of BPL under PDS

3397. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plans to expand the coverage of BPL under Public Distribution System to 8.07 crores from current 6.52 crore based on acceptance of Tendulkar Committee's poverty projections for 2011 by Planning Commission;

(b) whether this will entail outgo of about 34 million tonnes of foodgrains annually and food subsidy of about Rs. 54,000 crore annually on BPL account alone; and

(c) if so, whether Government has sent the proposal for approval of Empowered Group of Ministers and to what extent they have agreed and by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) For allocation of foodgrains (wheat and rice) to States and Union Territories (UTs) under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Department of Food and Public Distribution uses the number of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families based on 1993-94 poverty estimates of Planning Commission and the population estimates of the Registrar General of India as on 1st March, 2000 or the number of such families actually identified and ration cards issued to them by the State/UT Governments, whichever is less. As per these estimates, the number of BPL families is 6.52 crore, which includes 2.43 crores Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families. Allocation of foodgrains to these 6.52 crore BPL families are made @ 35 kg. per family per month.

Planning Commission constituted an Expert Group to review the methodology of estimation of poverty under the chairmanship of Prof. Suresh D. Tendulkar. The Expert Group submitted its report in December, 2009. As per Planning Commission, the Expert Group has, *inter-alia*, estimated all-India rural poverty headcount ratio for 2004-05 at 41.8% urban poverty headcount ratio at 25.7% and All India level at 37.2%.