

More than 40% of ration shops can now boast of being zero-theft ones

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OVER 2,20,000 OF the country's 5,27,000 ration shops have electronic point of sale or e-PoS machines that are used to check the identity of ration-card owners — that's 42.3% of the total compared to a mere 5,835 shops when the BJP came to power in May 2014. A total of over 18 crore ration cards, or 78% of the total, have been seeded with Aadhaar — this was just around 2% in May 2014.

Thanks to Aadhaar seeding, around 2.5 crore ration cards



have been cancelled. While that has yielded a 10% savings in annual ration subsidies, the government has, as yet, made no

move to hike the ration shop price of grain.

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The ration shop price of grain is just around a tenth of the cost — wheat that costs Food Corporation of India Rs 23.10 per kg is sold at Rs 2 and rice that costs Rs 32.60 per kg is sold at Rs 3. Nor has much progress been made in moving towards direct cash payments to the bank accounts of beneficiaries.

Both Aadhaar seeding and ePoS are critical to cutting ration shop theft which, according to estimates, varies between 40% and 50% of the total grain

distributed. While seeding is important to weed out fake ration card owners, ePoS is the only way of knowing whether a person using a ration card is the genuine holder.

While states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Haryana have more than 90% seeding and ePoS machines, the

laggard states have more or less remained the same for many months.

Just 75% of ration cards in Uttar Pradesh had been Aadhaar-seeded in March while the figure is up to 77% in June, the numbers for Bihar are up from

improvement over the 11% in March; there has been no change in the number of ration shops in Karnataka (3,877 out of 20,598) that have ePoS over this period.

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49% to 58% and West Bengal remains stuck at 62%.

When it comes to the proportion of ration shops that have ePoS, the number is a mere 1% in Uttar Pradesh (between March and now, the number of shops has doubled from 750 to 1,500) and zero in Bihar (the number remains the same at 59). Around 55% of ration shops in a state like Maharashtra have ePoS, though this is a significant