

Aadhaar-enabled devices keep ghost ration card holders at bay

Brajendra K Parashar

■ bkparashar@hindustantimes.com

LUCKNOW: At least 10% of the urban ration card holders have not been collecting subsidised food grains since the state government installed Aadhaar-enabled electronic point of sale (ePoS) devices at fair price shops in cities a year ago, food and civil supply commissioner Alok Kumar said.

“Maybe, they are ghost beneficiaries created by the ration shop owners,” he added.

The ghost beneficiaries are apparently created by the fair price shop owners to divert ration to the open market for their gain.

He said the department has already eliminated 1.50 lakh fake rations cards, replacing them with genuine ones in cities after installation of the ePoS devices at over 13,000 ration shops in urban areas.

The number of such beneficiaries no longer claiming rations

from the PDS shops is higher in the cities under the Meerut, Moradabad, Bareilly and Kanpur divisions.

“We will soon launch a door-to-door survey to identify the beneficiaries who have not collected their provisions for the last three months together and take steps accordingly,” said Kumar.

The results are expected to be even better when all the beneficiaries become Aadhaar-linked. At present, 30% of them are still not linked to Aadhaar.

An Aadhaar card-enabled public distribution system involves installation of ePoS devices equipped with biometric authentication at ration shops. Transactions are conducted digitally through the device. The identity of the beneficiaries collecting ration are authenticated via Aadhaar or a one-time pass word (OTP).

Even if the shopkeeper tries to skip authentication, the beneficiary will get an SMS alert on his

registered mobile number, informing him of the transaction. The ePoS was started as a pilot project in Lucknow in mid-2016. It was gradually extended to other cities.

AADHAAR-LINKED PDS IN VILLAGES ALSO SOON

Encouraged by positive results in cities, the state government is gearing up to install the ePoS devices at all the 67,000 PDS shops in villages too very soon. The move is expected to plug leakages in a big way.

“The request for a proposal seeking firms to implement the ePoS project in villages is ready and will be floated soon after it gets the Cabinet’s nod,” principal secretary, food and civil supply, Nivedita Shukla said. The installation of the devices at the PDS shops in villages might start by June.

Uttar Pradesh is among the states where the diversion/pilferage of the PDS food grains is said to be very high.