

Haryana giving ₹1,000cr pension to fake beneficiaries?

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Chandigarh: The Haryana government has been losing between Rs 600 crore and Rs 1,000 crore annually allegedly to bogus beneficiaries of various social security pension schemes, the state social justice and empowerment department has detected. The department has even stopped the pension of around 3.4 lakh beneficiaries who are suspected to be "fake".

The government found that these 3.4 lakh beneficiaries were getting pension without providing Aadhaar details or were using a false Aadhaar number. In other cases, the beneficiaries were Aadhaar holders of other states and invalidly repeating the numbers (using it for multiple schemes at the same time).

Out of a total of 23,16,944 beneficiaries, pension will be released to only 19,74,809 persons.

As many as 3,42,135 beneficiaries have been found to be receiving the pension illegally. Officials say they were getting financial aid under nine different social security schemes including old age and disability pensions. Money released to these accounts in July was Rs 50.64 crore.

The government has also identified nine lakh beneficiaries of these schemes whose

LOST PENSION

Without Aadhaar	45,117
Technically false Aadhaar details	91,194
Aadhaar holder of other states	26,634
Aadhaar invalidly repeated	1,79,190
Total	3,42,135

POLITICAL EFFECT

The decision of the state government may have huge political ramifications as social security pensions have been one of the major poll promises of all parties in Haryana. MLAs and senior leaders of ruling parties are seen recommending names of persons from their constituencies for the schemes.

names did not match with Aadhaar database and the government records. For the time being, however, their pension has not been stopped.

"The likely misappropriation of public money each year by way of wrongful transfers to ineligible and bogus beneficiaries is huge, between Rs 600-1,000 crores. The present exercise is aimed at preventing that," says a note received by the Haryana chief minister's office (CMO) from the department.

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Pensions: Biometric verification to remove bogus beneficiaries

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Sources confirmed to TOI that the decision to stop the pension was taken following a brain-storming session on Tuesday which was attended by officials from Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), state electronic and information technology department, National Informatics Centre (NIC), social justice and empowerment and other related departments.

The meeting, headed by the principal secretary (social justice and empowerment) Ashok Khemka, also decided to carry out biometric based Aadhaar verification from January 1 to March 31 every year to weed out ineligible beneficiaries. This was decided after noticing that a large number of beneficiaries with valid Aadhaar are dead but continued to get pension.

Khemka told TOI that as the trustee of public money, the department would not allow anyone to misappropriate the funds. "We found serious defects in the record of some beneficiaries and decided to verify them. Once verified, we would reactivate their accounts," he said. The bureaucrat took over the department a fortnight ago.