

**MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT)**

NATIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

[Action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in Thirty Fourth Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Estimates]

**COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES
(2014-2015)**

FOURTH REPORT

(FIFTEENTH LOK SABHA)



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

FOURTH REPORT

**COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES
(2014-15)**

SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT)**

[Action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in Thirty Fourth Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Estimates]

Presented to Lok Sabha on 28 April, 2015



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COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES
(2014-15)

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* Elected vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part-II No. 987 dated 03.012.2014 consequent upon vacancy caused by the appointment of Shri Hari Bhai Chaudhary, Member of Lok Sabha in the Council of Ministers w.e.f. 09.11.2014.

^ Elected vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part-II No. 987 dated 03.012.2014 consequent upon vacancy caused by the appointment of Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, Member of Lok Sabha in the Council of Ministers w.e.f. 09.11.2014.

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3. Shri Vipin Kumar - Director
4. Shri Srinivasulu Gunda - Additional Director
5. Shri U.C. Bharadwaj - Deputy Secretary

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Committee on Estimates, having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Fourth Report on action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Thirty Fourth Report of Estimates Committee (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) on the subject 'National Social Assistance Programme' pertaining to the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development).

2. The Thirty Fourth Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) was presented to Lok Sabha on 5 February, 2014. The Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) furnished their replies indicating action taken on the recommendations contained in the said Report on 7 July, 2014. The Draft Report was considered and adopted by the Committee on Estimates (2014-2015) at their sitting held on 15 April, 2015.

3. An analysis of action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Thirty Fourth Report of the Committee on Estimates (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix II.

NEW DELHI;
22 April, 2015
Vaisakha 2, 1937 (saka)

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI
Chairperson,
Committee on Estimates.

CHAPTER - I

REPORT

This Report of the Committee deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Thirty-fourth Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) on 'National Social Assistance Programme' pertaining to the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development).

1.2 The Thirty-fourth Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 05 February, 2014. It contained 11 Observations/Recommendations. Action Taken Replies on all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report were received from the Department of Rural Development on 07 July, 2014.

1.3 Replies to the Observations and Recommendations contained in the Report have broadly been categorized as under:-

- (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:
Sl. Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10
- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government's reply:
Sl. Nos. Nil
- (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which Government's replies have not been accepted by the Committee and recommendations have been reiterated:
Sl. Nos. 1, 5, 7, 8 and 11
- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final reply of Government is still awaited:
Sl. Nos. Nil

1.4 The Committee earnestly hope that speedy and conclusive action would be taken to implement the Observations/Recommendations accepted by the Government. The Committee desire that further Action Taken notes on the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-I of this Report be furnished to them at an early date but positively within three months of the presentation of this report.

1.5 The Committee will now deal with the action taken by the Government on some of their recommendations.

Task Force on NSAP

(Recommendation Para No. 1)

1.6 Having observed that the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) suffers from a number of shortcomings in relation to eligibility criteria, identification of beneficiaries, quantum of assistance, grievance redressal etc. and having further observed that a Task Force appointed by the Ministry of Rural Development had already looked into most of these issues and submitted its report in March 2013, the Committee in their Thirty-fourth Report had desired that the recommendations made by the said Task Force be addressed expeditiously.

1.7 The Government in their Action Taken Replies informed that a Task Force was constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme. The Task Force considered the issues pertaining to eligibility criteria, identification of beneficiaries, quantum of assistance and grievance redressal etc., and after deliberations, submitted its report to the Ministry inter-alia recommending, expanding

the scope of coverage and enhancing the quantum of pension. The recommendations of the Task Force have been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the mechanism of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

1.8 The Committee note with deep concern that despite their recommendation contained in their the 34th Report presented to Lok Sabha on 05 February, 2014, to implement expeditiously the report of the Task Force appointed to go into the shortcomings of the NSAP, the report of the Task Force is still under examination. The Committee are dismayed to note the cavalier manner in which the serious problems of the very old, the differently abled and the widows are pending for consideration and decision for so long as the Task Force had submitted its report to the Government in March 2013. Taking note of the severe plight of the concerned disadvantaged group, the Committee strongly urge the Government to consider and implement the recommendations of the Task Force without further loss of time and apprise the Committee within three months.

Variations in pension schemes under NSAP

(Recommendation Para No. 2)

1.9 Observing the *inter-se* variations between the three pension schemes being run under National Social Assistance Programme viz. Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) and Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) as also the wide variations in the pension schemes being run by various States (between Rs. 50 and Rs. 1800 per month), the Committee had desired that the central pension amount

under NSAP should be indexed to inflation and raised in a phased manner from the current level. They had also asked the Ministry as to why the central pension under IGNOAPS should not be raised from Rs.200 to Rs.300 per month as given to pensioners under IGNDPS and IGNWPS w.e.f. 1 February, 2012 i.e. the date from which the pension amount in the latter two was hiked.

1.10 In their Action Taken Reply the Government have stated that the Task Force constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme in its report inter-alia recommended, indexing the rate of pension to inflation using criteria adopted for DA of central government employees and enhancing the quantum of pension. This recommendations of the Task Force has been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the mechanism of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

1.11 The Committee, taking note of the action initiated by the Government desire that the matter should be taken to its logical conclusion without further delay and the Committee apprised in due course of the tangible outcome thereof.

Socio Economic and Caste Census, 2011

(Recommendation Para No. 3)

1.12 Observing that only those Below Poverty Line (BPL) are eligible for availing pension under NSAP but due to the process of selection of persons for BPL list is being admittedly faulty as many deserving people are left out and undeserving people get included and observing further that the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC), being

undertaken by the Registrar General of India through State Governments would bring out an accurate list of eligible people and will lead to better system of service delivery, the Committee had hoped that the SECC would be completed expeditiously and had desired that selection of beneficiaries be based on SECC from the year 2014-15, when the NSAP will become a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

1.13 The Government submitted in their Action Taken Reply that a Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC 2011) has been launched on 29th June 2011 in the country which would be carried out by the respective State/Union Territory Governments with the financial and technical support of the Government of India to determine eligibility and entitlements for different Central Government Schemes. Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) is being carried out in all States/UTs in a phased manner taking into consideration their preparedness and other relevant considerations. The SECC 2011 is being conducted through a comprehensive programme involving the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India and the State Governments. The subject of Caste Census comes under purview of Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India and issues of identification of BPL households in rural areas and urban areas come under the purview of Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (HUPA) respectively. The Ministry of Rural Development has been continuously monitoring the progress of SECC 2011 with the States/Uts through regular visits, trainings and video conferencing to ensure early completion and sort out various issues with the States/UTs. Specific reviews and assessment of the progress of the SECC are also taken up with the States/UTs in the Performance Review Committee (PRC) meetings held on a quarterly basis. The Ministry of Rural Development has set up an Expert Committee on 28th December, 2012 under the Chairmanship of Prof. Abhijit Sen to examine the SECC indicators and the data analysis and recommend appropriate methodologies for determining classes of beneficiaries for different rural development programmes. It will consult States, Experts and Civil Society Organizations, while

arriving at these methodologies. Enumeration under the Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) was completed in 2,464,909 Enumeration Blocks (EBs) consisting of 99.46% per cent of total Enumeration Blocks (EBs) of all the States/UTs as on 31.03.2014. The first steps in the 'Claim & Objection's process is to display in the 'Draft List' containing the household data collected during the SECC. The 'Draft List' publication and displaying protocol was reviewed again keeping in view the quality/legibility of the cropped-up National Population Register (NPR) images. It has been decided to publish the 'Draft List' with both the machine converted images in text to the extent possible and the remaining unmatched images will be cropped in the 'Draft List". So far, Haryana, Nagaland, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep have published the 'Draft List' and the 'Claim & Objections' process is over. Some of the States/UTs are in the process of Verification & Correction and 'Draft List' publication. 'Draft List' has been published in 202 districts in 18 States (Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala , Meghalaya, Manipur, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal including in the four States/UTs where the 'Claim & Objections' process is over). The target to complete the SECC process is September, 2014.

1.14 The Committee note that substantial progress has been made towards completion of Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC). They, therefore, desire that with a view to ensuring that only deserving people are covered under these Schemes, SECC should be made the basis of identification of beneficiaries under all schemes under NSAP without any further loss of time. They would like to be apprised of the outcome and action taken on SECC which was scheduled to be completed by September, 2014.

Social Audit Mechanism

(Recommendation Para No. 4)

1.15 Noting that a social audit system is being conceived by the Ministry of Rural Development as a grievance redressal mechanism, to be conducted by the Gram Sabha/ Municipality once in 6 months to verify details of beneficiaries, the Committee had desired that it should be ensured that the Social Audit mechanism is established in all the States and the social audit conducted at the earliest.

1.16 In their Action Taken Replies the Government have stated that the Ministry of Rural Development is in the process of issuing revised guidelines of National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) since the scheme has been converted into a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with effect from 1st April, 2014. These revised guidelines inter-alia would include directions regarding establishing Social Audit mechanism in all the States and Union Territories and to conduct the social audit once in every six months.

1.17 The Committee note that pursuant to their recommendation, the Ministry are in the process of issuing revised Guidelines of NSAP which has since been converted into a centrally sponsored scheme w.e.f. 1 April, 2014, which include directions regarding establishing Social Audit Mechanism in all States and UTs and to conduct social audit once in every six months. They expect that the revised Guidelines are issued expeditiously so that the necessary course correction in NSAP is affected without delay. They would like to be apprised of the current status of the matter.

Age Criterion for pension under IGNWPS

(Recommendation Para No. 5)

1.18 Finding the minimum age criterion of 40 years for Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme(IGNWPS) unreasonable as widows in the age group of 18-40 years face difficulty in bringing up their children, especially in providing them education, in the absence of regular source of income and it may not be uncommon to find such widows sending their children of school going age to work, in order to supplement their income, the Committee had felt that there should be incentive for widow re-marriage and until re-marriage, a widow should not be deprived of financial help because of her young age and recommended that the benefits under IGNWPS should be extended to all the widows. They had also recommended that pension under IGNWPS should be increased to Rs. 1000 per month per beneficiary.

1.19 In their Action Taken Reply the Government have stated that Task Force constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme in its report inter-alia recommended, enhancing the quantum of pension to the widows under IGNWPS. The recommendations of the Task Force have been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

1.20 The Committee are of the considered view that the measures for mitigating the unending woes of the poverty stricken widows of any age group cannot brook any further delay. They, therefore, reiterate their recommendation that the quantum of pension to the widows under IGNWPS, as also recommended by the Task Force, be enhanced, expeditiously.

Coverage Under IGNWPS

(Recommendation Para No. 6)

1.21 Observing single, abandoned and divorcee women, find it hard to survive in the absence of regular employment/source of income, the Committee had felt that inclusion of these categories of women under IGWPS by suitably enlarging its scope will enable them to lead a dignified life. They had also recommended inclusion of divorcee women under the pension scheme provided they do not get alimony and remain unemployed.

1.22 The Government in their Action Taken Reply have stated that the Task Force constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme in its report inter-alia recommended, providing assistance to single, never married women above 40 years and abandoned and divorced women. The recommendations of the Task Force have been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

1.23 The Committee note the action taken by the Government thus far in the direction of implementation of their recommendation and desire that the matter may be followed up by the Ministry constantly and vigourously with the Ministry of Finance so as to mitigate the sufferings and hardships being faced by the abandoned and divorcee women.

Coverage of Disabled under NSAP

(Recommendation Para No. 7)

1.24 Noting that the Persons With Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act, 1995) defines a person with disability as a

person suffering from not less than 40% of any disability but Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) covered only those who suffer from severe or multiple disabilities of 80% and above thus leaving out many BPL people with disabilities, who are vulnerable, the Committee had recommended that in consonance with the definition of the disabled persons as given in the PWD Act, 1995, all such persons with 40% and above disability, should be covered under IGNDPS.

1.25 In response to the recommendation of the Committee, Government had replied that the Task Force constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme in its report inter-alia recommended that the age restriction under IGNDPS should be removed, and definition of disability should be in consonance with The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and full Participation) Act, 1995, making 40% disability eligible for pension under IGNDPS. This recommendation of the Task Force has been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

1.26 The Committee are saddened to note that their recommendation for inclusion of specific category of PWDs under the IGNDPS has been hanging fire for long due to the inordinate procedural delay in procuring the approval of the competent authority. Notably, the present coverage of disabled people under NSAP is violative of the Act enacted for the purpose of defining disability. The Committee while disapproving the delay, desire that the needful be done forthwith to bring the Scheme in consonance with The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and full Participation) Act, 1995 without any further delay. Moreso, when in its reply to the another

recommendation of the Committee, the Ministry has admitted that the said Act is the guiding factor for provision of pension under Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS). The Committee should like to be apprised of the action taken in the matter within one month of the presentation of this Report to the Lok Sabha.

Expanding the ambit of NSAP

(Recommendation Para No. 8)

1.27 Noting that another vulnerable section of the society i.e. 'dwarfs' born with physical infirmities and in most cases, unable to find employment opportunities also do not come under the purview of NSAP, the Committee had felt that they deserved to be brought under social security net. They had, therefore, recommended that the ambit of the scheme of IGNDPS should be suitably widened to include 'dwarfs'.

1.28 The Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) in Action Taken Reply have stated that the eligibility for coverage under Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) is guided by the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (PWD Act 1995) and the 'National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (National Trust Act, 1999) revised from time to time and any other guidelines issued by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. At present dwarfs have not been included in the above acts, which is the guiding factor for provision of pension under Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS). If 'dwarfs' are included in any of the above Acts by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, they would automatically become eligible for pension under IGNDPS on fulfilling the other eligibility criteria.

1.29 The Committee had quite unambiguously and categorically recommended that the ambit of IGNDPS should be suitably widened to include 'dwarfs'. The

Committee note the reply of the Ministry of Rural Development that if 'dwarfs' are included in the concerned Acts administered by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, they would automatically become eligible for pension under IGNDPS. Regrettably, the Ministry of Rural Development did not take up the matter with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for moving necessary amendments to the concerned Acts so as to admit the 'dwarfs' to the benefit of pension. While deploring lack of initiative on the part of the Ministry of Rural Development, the Committee reiterate that matter be taken up with Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in right earnest so that necessary amendments are effected in the concerned Acts so that the dwarfs become eligible for pension. Further, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment need to undertake categorisation, classification and enumeration of the differently abled persons at regular intervals so that they get atleast proportionate reservation in the jobs and services under the Union.

NSAP beneficiaries under DBT

(Recommendation Para No. 9)

1.30 Noting that 32% of the total 3.09 Crore beneficiaries are paid benefits under NSAP through cash which is susceptible to corruption. Further noting that the completion of digitization of database of all beneficiaries and extending the DBT to the entire country is likely to take sometime, the Committee had recommended that urgent steps be taken to ensure that mode of cash payment to beneficiaries under NSAP is switched over to other corruption-free modes at the earliest. Simultaneously, extending

the DBT to the entire country for disbursement of NSAP benefits be completed within a time frame.

1.31 The Government in their Action Taken Reply have stated that the existing modes of payment of pensions are Banks, Post Office Account, Money Order and Cash. Since inception of the Scheme, all the above modes of payment were suggested and States have followed different methods based on the convenience of the beneficiaries and feasibility. In some areas, the spread of banks and post offices is not even. Crediting the pension amount into the bank/post office may not entirely serve the purpose as the old age pension beneficiaries and disabled beneficiaries may find it difficult to travel to the nearest bank/post office branch. Therefore, some States like Odisha and Bihar have followed the model of cash disbursement. Postal Money Order ensures door step delivery of pension, and has been adopted by many States successfully. However, to encourage savings and to ensure financial inclusion, the States have been advised to encourage opening of Bank/Post Office Accounts. States / UTs are being advised that payment of assistance in cash to beneficiaries should be adopted only if other modes are not workable. Through periodic reviews, States have been requested to ensure regular disbursement of assistance.

1.32 In order to increase transparency, accountability and monitoring of implementation of NSAP schemes, Ministry with assistance of NIC has developed a work flow enabled software for the purpose viz., NSAP-MIS. The software captures all the essential processes and includes modules on identification, disbursement of pension, release of funds, verification, sanction of pension, ground for rejection of application etc. Data base of 207 lakh beneficiaries has so far been uploaded as on 31st March, 2014 out of which, 27% of the beneficiaries have accounts in bank and 16% of the beneficiaries have accounts in post office. In July 2013, DBT has been launched in 121 pilot districts of the country covering 26 States / UTs. The bank accounts of beneficiaries are being brought under Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) so that the pension is directly transferred to into the account of the beneficiaries by the disbursing office. As

per NSAP-MIS, Direct Transfer of pensions into accounts of pensioners, as on 31 March, 2014 was Rs.213.89 crore, and the number of pensioners was 35.35 lakhs. Further, as on 31st March, 2014, digitization of 92% of the beneficiaries database has been completed, out of which, 45% of the beneficiaries have accounts in bank and 34% of the beneficiaries have accounts in post office. A total of 14.34 Lakhs beneficiaries are having Aadhaar number out of which 46.36% beneficiaries have linked their Aadhaar number with bank accounts and 36.42% beneficiaries have linked their Aadhaar number with post office accounts.

1.33 The Committee note with satisfaction the action taken by the Government for bringing in more efficiency and transparency in the delivery mechanism of NSAP. Keeping in view the record breaking feat of opening 12.5 crore no frills accounts under the PM Jan Dhan Yojna, the Committee are sure that the delivery system would become more efficient in the coming days and the leakages totally eliminated.

**Coverage of beggars under NSAP
(Recommendation Para No. 11)**

1.34 Aware of the fact that despite the existence of social security schemes providing pensions to specified disadvantaged sections of the society, the menace of begging is still persisting and believing that had the social security schemes been effective in taking care of the basic needs of the disadvantaged sections, the prevalence of beggary could have been arrested, the Committee had recommended that a time bound study, be conducted as to why despite NSAP beggary menace persists and such remedial measures, as may be necessary on the basis of the outcome of the study to ensure that NSAP yields desired results, are taken.

1.35 The Government in their Action Taken reply have stated that Schemes under NSAP are applicable only to old age, widow and disabled people who are the most vulnerable sections of the society. As per the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, the subject of beggary has been allocated to Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The views of the Hon'ble Committee will be shared with the concerned Ministry.

1.36 The Committee are concerned to note that even after a lapse of six months since the presentation of their Report, the Ministry of Rural Development has merely thought of sharing the recommendation of the Committee with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The least the Ministry should have done was to share the recommendation of the Committee immediately after its presentation with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and revert to the Committee with the action taken by the latter. Deploring such a casualness on the part of the Ministry of Rural Development to consider widening the net of NSAP so as to address the social security concerns of the beggars, the Committee reiterate their earlier recommendation for necessary but speedy corrective action.

CHAPTER II

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 2)

The Committee observe that Rs.200 is given as pension under Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) for those 80 years and above of age; Rs.300 is given under Indira Gandhi national Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) for those between 18 and 79 years of age and Rs.300 under Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) for widows between 40 and 79 years of age. The Committee feel that the current level of pension under IGNOAPS is too small and inadequate. The Committee note that the most of the States have their own pension and the amount of pension under IGNOAPS varies from Rs.50 to 1800. While in Goa, the State pension is Rs.1800*, in some North-Eastern States, it is as little as Rs.50. there are four States viz. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur which do not have their own pension schemes. The Committee desire that the central pension amount under NSAP should be indexed to inflation and raised in a phased manner from the current level. The Committee in this connection see no reason why central pension under IGNOAPS should not be raised from Rs.200 to Rs. 300 as given to pensioners under IGNDPS and IGNWPS. The Committee strongly recommend that as a first step, action should be taken to raise the pension amount under IGNOAPS to Rs.300 w.e.f 01.02.2012, the date the pension amount was raised to Rs.300 under IGNDPS and IGNWPS.

Reply by the Government

The Task Force constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme in its report inter-alia recommended, indexing the rate of pension to inflation using criteria adopted for DA of central government employees and enhancing the quantum of pension. This recommendations of the Task Force has been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the mechanism of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.11 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 3)

The Committee observe that only those in the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category are eligible for availing pension under NSAP. The process of selection of persons for BPL list is, however, admittedly faulty as many deserving people are left out and undeserving people get included. According to the Secretary, Rural Development, socio Economic Caste Census (SECC), currently being undertaken by the Registrar General of India through State Governments will bring out accurate list of eligible people and will lead to better system of service delivery. It is observed from the information furnished to the Committee that SECC has been completed in 19 out of 35 States/UTs and the work in the remaining States/UTs is in progress. The Committee hopes that the SECC would be completed expeditiously. The Committee desire that selection of beneficiaries be based on SECC from the year 2014-15, when the NSAP will become a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Reply by the Government

A Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC 2011) has been launched on 29th June 2011 in the country which would be carried out by the respective State/Union Territory Governments with the financial and technical support of the Government of India to determine eligibility and entitlements for different Central Government Schemes. Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) is being carried out in all States/UTs in a phased manner taking into consideration their preparedness and other relevant considerations. The SECC 2011 is being conducted through a comprehensive programme involving the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India and the State Governments. The subject of Caste Census comes under purview of Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India and issues of identification of BPL households in rural areas and urban areas come under the purview of Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (HUPA) respectively.

The Ministry of Rural Development has been continuously monitoring the progress of SECC 2011 with the States/UTs through regular visits, trainings and video conferencing to ensure early completion and sort out various issues with the States/UTs. Specific reviews and assessment of the progress of the SECC are also taken up with the States/UTs in the Performance Review Committee (PRC) meeting held on a quarterly basis.

The Ministry of Rural Development has set up an Expert Committee on 28th December, 2012 under the Chairmanship of Prof. Abhijit Sen to examine the SECC indicators and the data analysis and recommend appropriate methodologies for

determining classes of beneficiaries for different rural development programmes. It will consult States, Experts and Civil Society Organizations, while arriving at these methodologies.

Enumeration under the Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) was completed in 2,464,909 Enumeration Blocks (EBs) consisting of 99.46% per cent of total Enumeration Blocks (EBs) of all the States/UTs as on 31.03.2014. The first steps in the 'Claim & Objection's process is to display in the 'Draft List' containing the household data collected during the SECC. The 'Draft List' publication and displaying protocol was reviewed again keeping in view the quality/legibility of the cropped-up National Population Register (NPR) images. It has been decided to publish the 'Draft List' with both the machine converted images in text to the extent possible and the remaining unmatched images will be cropped in the 'Draft List". So far, Haryana, Nagaland, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep have published the 'Draft List' and the 'Claim & Objections' process is over. Some of the States/UTs are in the process of Verification & Correction and 'Draft List' publication. 'Draft List' has been published in 202 districts in 18 states (Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Meghalaya, Manipur, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal including in the four states /UTs where the 'Claim & Objections' process is over). The target to complete the SECC process is September, 2014.

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.14 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 4)

Social audit system is now being conceived by the Ministry of Rural Development as a grievance redressal mechanism, to be conducted by the Gram Sabha/ Municipality

once in 6 months which would verify details of beneficiaries. This is a welcome move to ensure that only eligible persons get benefits under NSAP. The Committee desire that it should be ensured that the Social Audit mechanism is established in all the States and the social audit conducted at the earliest.

Reply by the Government

The Ministry of Rural Development is in the process of issuing revised guidelines of National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) since the scheme has been converted into a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with effect from 1st April, 2014. These revised guidelines inter-alia would include directions regarding establishing Social Audit mechanism in all the States and Union Territories and to conduct the social audit once in every six months.

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.17 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 6)

The Committee observe that single, abandoned and divorcee women, find it hard to survive in the absence of regular employment/source of income. They feel that inclusion of these categories of women under IGWPS by suitably enlarging its scope will enable them to lead a dignified life. The Committee, accordingly, divorcee women, provided they do not get alimony and remain unemployed should be covered under the pension scheme.

Reply by the Government

The Task Force constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme in its report inter-alia recommended, providing assistance to single, never married women above 40 years and abandoned and divorced women. The recommendations of the Task Force have been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.23 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 9)

The Committee find that 32% of the total 3.09 Crore beneficiaries are paid benefits under NSAP through cash which is susceptible to corruption. The government have reportedly introduced Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme since 1.07.2013 on pilot basis covering almost 80% of the beneficiaries in 121 districts. Depositing before the Committee on 18.09.2013, the secretary, Rural development stated that basic data pertaining to 1.9 Crore beneficiaries have been uploaded into the database and that of the remaining beneficiaries will be uploaded over the next few months. Since the completion of digitization of database of all beneficiaries and extending the DBT to the entire country is likely to take some time; the Committee desire that urgent steps be taken to ensure that mode of cash payment to beneficiaries under NSAP is switched over to other corruption-free modes at the earliest. Simultaneously, extending the DBT

to the entire country for disbursement of NSAP benefits be completed within a time frame under intimation to the Committee.

Reply by the Government

The existing modes of payment of pensions are Banks, Post Office Account, Money Order and Cash. Since inception of the Scheme, all the above modes of payment were suggested and States have followed different methods based on the convenience of the beneficiaries and feasibility. In some areas, the spread of banks and post offices is not even. Crediting the pension amount into the bank/post office may not entirely serve the purpose as the old age pension beneficiaries and disabled beneficiaries may find it difficult to travel to the nearest bank/post office branch. Therefore, some States like Odisha and Bihar have followed the model of cash disbursement. Postal Money Order ensures door step delivery of pension, and has been adopted by many States successfully. However, to encourage savings and to ensure financial inclusion, the States have been advised to encourage opening of Bank/Post Office Accounts. States / UTs are being advised that payment of assistance in cash to beneficiaries should be adopted only if other modes are not workable. Through periodic reviews, States have been requested to ensure regular disbursement of assistance.

In order to increase transparency, accountability and monitoring of implementation of NSAP schemes, Ministry with assistance of NIC has developed a work flow enabled software for the purpose viz., NSAP-MIS. The software captures all the essential processes and includes modules on identification, disbursement of pension, release of funds, verification, sanction of pension, ground for rejection of application etc. Data base of 207 lakh beneficiaries has so far been uploaded as on 31st March, 2014 out of which, 27% of the beneficiaries have accounts in bank and 16% of the beneficiaries have accounts in post office.

In July 2013, DBT has been launched in 121 pilot districts of the country covering 26 States / UTs. The bank accounts of beneficiaries are being brought under Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) so that the pension is directly transferred to into the account of the beneficiaries by the disbursing office. As per NSAP-MIS, Direct Transfer of pensions into accounts of pensioners, as on 31 March, 2014 was Rs.213.89 crore, and the number of pensioners was 35.35 lakhs. Further, as on 31st March, 2014, digitization of 92% of the beneficiaries database has been completed, out of which, 45% of the beneficiaries have accounts in bank and 34% of the beneficiaries have accounts in post office. A total of 14.34 Lakhs beneficiaries are having Aadhaar number out of which 46.36% beneficiaries have linked their Aadhaar number with bank accounts and 36.42% beneficiaries have linked their Aadhaar number with post office accounts.

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.33 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 10)

The Committee received an impression that the Ministry of Rural Development is not pro-active in addressing the grievances under NSAP. There is no grievance redressal mechanism at the Central level to look in to the grievances under NSAP. The Committee find from the information furnished to them that out of 9 complaints received during the last four years, only two complaints received from Members of Parliament were forwarded to National Level Monitors (NLMs) for conducting inquiry which resulted in corrective steps and action against the errant officials. The Committee wonder why the Ministry of rural Development did not send the remaining seven complaints to National Level Monitors for inquiry. The seven complaints to National Level Monitors for

concerned and the status of action thereon is not known. The Committee would like to know the details of seven complaints and like to be apprised as to why those complaints were not sent to NLM and what was the action taken by the State Governments concerned in the matter.

Reply by the Government

NSAP which is under State Plan and at the ground level, is implemented by the State / UT Governments. Identification of beneficiaries, sanction and disbursement of benefits are done by the State / UT Governments. Complaints received in this Ministry relating to disbursements, implementation and identification of beneficiaries are forwarded to the State / UT Governments for taking necessary action under intimation to the Ministry.

As per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for complaint redressal, the Division of the Ministry on receipt of the complaint will categorise the complaint into 'Serious' / 'Others' / 'Trivial'. While the 'trivial' cases may be disposed off straight away, in respect of 'Other' cases the complaints are forwarded to the State Government to enquire whether the complaints are falling in 'serious' or 'trivial' category. Where prima facie, in any 'serious' case the facts alleged are so serious, National Level Monitors are deputed for enquiring into the matter.

Taking into account the above Standard Operating Procedure, the two complaints wherein prima facie, the allegations were found to be serious in nature, have been referred to the National Level Monitors (NLMs) for enquiry. In respect of the other 7 complaints, wherein prima facie, the allegations did not appear serious, the complaints were forwarded to the respective State Governments to enquire into the matter. Reminder has been issued to the respective State Governments to furnish the action taken report on the 7 complaints immediately and the State Governments have

also been reminded during the Performance Review Committee Meeting in June, 2014 to forward the action taken report.

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

CHAPTER III

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES

Nil

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 1)

The National Social Assistance Programme(NSAP) which had three components when introduced in the year 1995, presently comprises five schemes viz (1) Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) 2. Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) 3. Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) 4. National Family Benefit Scheme(NFBS) and 5. Annapurna Scheme. The number of beneficiaries under NSAP has gone up from 2.16 crore in 2009-10 to 3.09 crore in 2012-13 and budgetary allocation increased from Rs.5200 crore to Rs.8447 crore during the corresponding years. The examination of the subject by the Committee reveals that NSAP suffers from a number of shortcomings in relation to eligibility criteria, identification of beneficiaries, quantum of assistance, grievance redressal etc. A Task Force appointed by the Ministry of Rural development has looked into most of these issues and submitted its report in March,2013. The Committee desire that the recommendations made by the Task Force be addressed expeditiously and the Committee be informed of the action taken thereon.

Reply by the Government

A Task Force was constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme. The Task Force considered the issues pertaining to eligibility criteria, identification of beneficiaries, quantum of assistance and grievance

redressal etc., and after deliberations, submitted its report to the Ministry inter-alia recommending, expanding the scope of coverage and enhancing the quantum of pension. The recommendations of the Task Force have been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the mechanism of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] - H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.8 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 5)

The minimum age criterion of 40 years for Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) appears to be unreasonable as widows in the age group of 18-40 years face difficulty in bringing up their children, especially in providing them education, in the absence of regular source of income. It may not be uncommon to find such widows sending their children of school going age to work, in order to supplement their income. The Committee feels that there should be incentive for widow re-marriage and until re-marriage, a widow should not be deprived of financial help because of her young age. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the benefits under IGNWPS should be extended to all the widows. They also recommend that pension under IGNWPS should be increased to Rs. 1000 per month per beneficiary.

Reply by the Government

The Task Force constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme in its report inter-alia recommended, enhancing the quantum of

pension to the widows under IGNWPS. The recommendations of the Task Force have been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure)

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.20 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 7)

The Persons With Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act, 1995) defines person with disability as a person suffering from not less than 40% of any disability. Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) however covers only those who suffer from severe or multiple disabilities of 80% and above. IGNDPS as currently operated leaves out many BPL people with disabilities, who are vulnerable. The Committee is of the view that in consonance with the definition of the disabled persons as given in the PWD Act, 1995, all such persons with 40% and above disability, should be covered under IGNDPS.

Reply by the Government

The Task Force constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme in its report inter-alia recommended, that the age restriction under IGNDPS should be removed, and definition of disability should be in consonance with The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and full Participation) Act, 1995, making 40% disability eligible for pension under IGNDPS. This

recommendation of the Task Force has been examined in detail in the Ministry of Rural Development. Further action has been initiated to take the approval of the Competent Authority through the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) headed by Secretary (Expenditure).

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.26 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 8)

Another vulnerable section of the society which does not come under the purview of NSAP is 'dwarfs' born with physical infirmities and in most cases, unable to find employment opportunities. They deserve to be brought under Social Security net. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the ambit of the scheme of IGNDPS should be suitably widened to include 'dwarfs' under the eligibility criterion.

Reply by the Government

The eligibility for coverage under Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) is guided by the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (PWD Act 1995) and the 'National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (National Trust Act, 1999) revised from time to time and any other guidelines issued by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. At present dwarfs have not been included in the above acts, which is the guiding factor for provision of pension under Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS). If 'dwarfs' are included in any of the above Acts by

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, they would automatically become eligible for pension under IGNDPS on fulfilling the other eligibility criteria.

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.29 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 11)

The Committee are of the view that despite the existence of social security schemes providing pensions to specified disadvantaged sections of the society, the menace of begging is still persisting. The Committee believe that had the social security schemes been effective in taking care of the basic needs of the disadvantaged sections, the prevalence of beggary could have been arrested. The Committee, therefore, recommend that a time bound study, be conducted as to why despite NSAP beggary menace persists and take such remedial measures as may be necessary on the basis of the outcome of the study to ensure that NSAP yields desired results and the Committee be informed of the outcome.

Reply by the Government

Schemes under NSAP are applicable only to old age, widow and disabled people who are the most vulnerable sections of the society. As per the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, the subject of beggary has been allocated to Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The views of the Hon'ble Committee will be shared with the concerned Ministry.

Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development) – [NSAP Division] – O.M. No. H-11013/2/2013-NSAP(Part)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.36 of Chapter - I)

CHAPTER V

**RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH FINAL REPLIES
OF GOVERNMENT ARE STILL AWAITED**

Nil

NEW DELHI;
22 April, 2015
Vaisakha 2, 1937 (saka)

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI
Chairperson,
Committee on Estimates.

APPENDIX II

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE THIRTY FOURTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES (FIFTEENTH LOK SABHA)

(i)	Total number of recommendations/observations	11
(ii)	Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by the Government (Sl. Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10)	06
	Percentage of total recommendations	54.5%
(iii)	Recommendation/Observation which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's reply	Nil
	Percentage of total recommendations	0%
(iv)	Recommendations/Observations in respect of which Government's replies have not been accepted by the Committee (Sl. Nos. 1, 5, 7, 8 and 11)	05
	Percentage of total recommendations	45.5%
(v)	Recommendation/Observation in respect of which final replies of Government is still awaited.	Nil
	Percentage of total recommendations	0%