

# Hi-tech way to check fake ration cards

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With the prolonged drive to weed out fake ration cards not yielding the desired results, the government has decided to computerise the sale outlets under the Public Distribution System (PDS) to pave the way for biometric identification of beneficiaries. The project will be funded by the UNDP. A pilot scheme will be implemented initially.

The Civil Supplies Department has been unable to weed out bogus ration cards and a recent survey carried out by it revealed excess ration card population of 2,05,579 which availed the facility of subsidised ration across the state. The financial burden on the

government is enormous as not only the economically weaker sections are provided essential commodities, but even the above poverty line (APL) families are supplied items like pulses, edible oil and salt at subsidised rates.

The department has now decided to use hi-tech IT innovation to find a permanent solution to the problem under which sales operations will be computerised. The machines will have biometric features for the identification of cardholders from the thumb impression and, thus, ensure that no fake cardholder gets the benefit of subsidised ration.

Biometric data of two or three members from every family will be stored in the computer for the purpose of identification so that genuine

cardholders did not face any difficulty in drawing their monthly quota of ration.

The issue was discussed with the UNDP team that visited the state early this week to monitor the progress of ongoing projects funded by it. The team was impressed by the "Sugam" centre established at the deputy commissioner's office and agreed to provide fund for opening a similar centre in one more district. The centre provides IT-enabled services to the public.

Since Shimla was a big city, the government proposed to open three more centres in collaboration with the local municipal corporation that would provide space in its existing offices at Dhalli, Tutu and the Ridge for the purpose, Aggrawal said.