

**GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY  
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR -CUM- DISTRICT MAGISTRATE  
PUDUCHERRY**

No.940/D2/COVID/DM/2020

Puducherry, dt.19.04.2020

To

The Chief Secretary,  
Puducherry.

Sir,

Sub: DRDM - COVID-19 - Current System of Distribution of  
Free Rice to the Target Beneficiaries - Report -  
Submitted.

Ref: This office letter of even number dt.16.04.2020.

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As per the direction of the Chief Secretary and as reviewed by the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor through audio conferencing on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, the Undersigned reviewed the existing system of distribution of free rice to the target beneficiaries by the Civil Supplies Department. In this regard, it is stated that the Government of India has allotted food grains to the U.T of Puducherry for distribution to all the beneficiaries under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) (AAY and PHH) @ 5kg per person per month free of cost for a period of three months, i.e. April-June, 2020, totalling to 15kg per person in view of COVID-19 lockdown situation.

2. At present, the food grains (rice) is distributed to the eligible beneficiaries as per the following setup from 9<sup>th</sup> April:

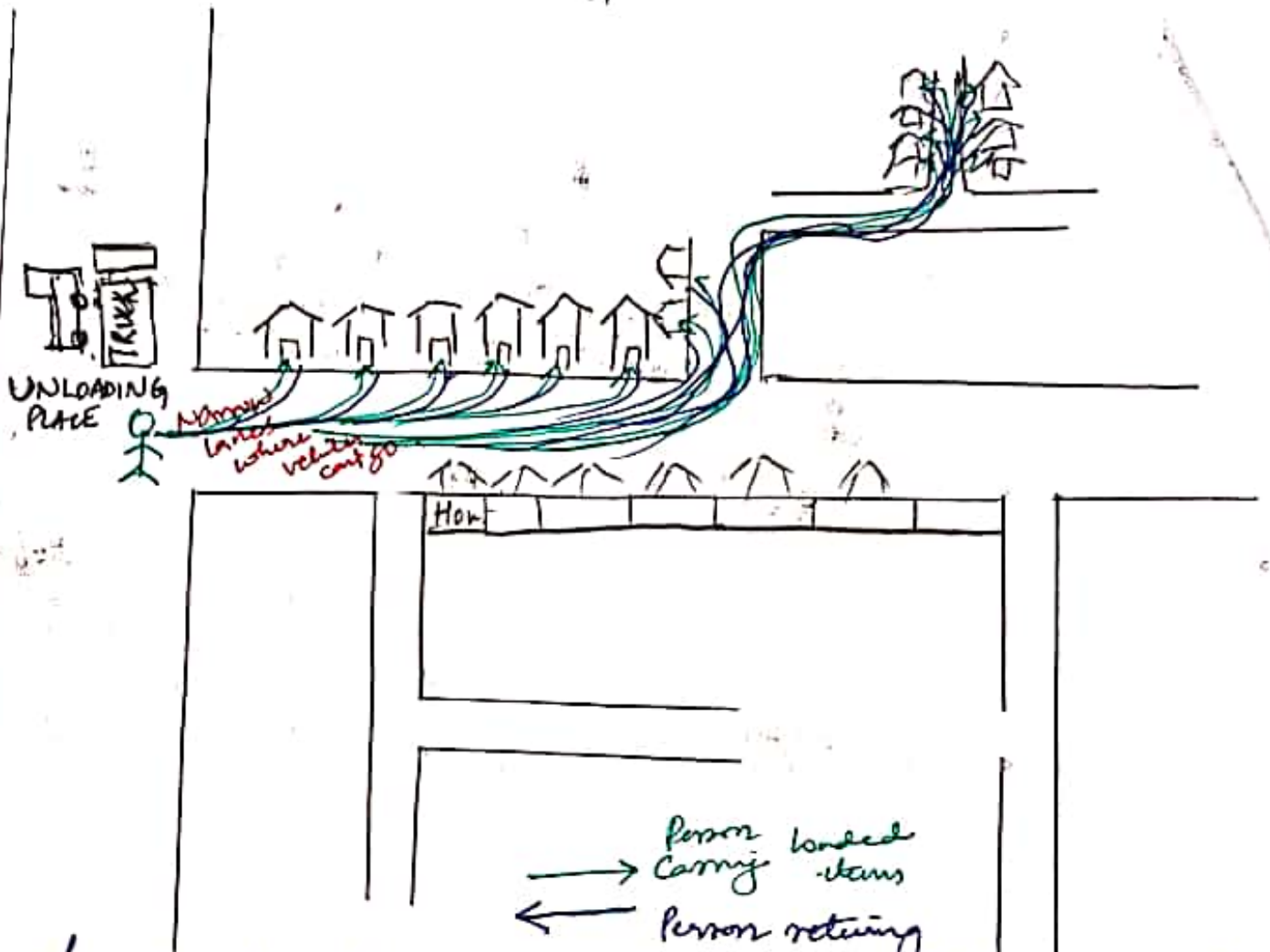
- i. The rice stock from the FCI godown in Thiruvandarkoil is transferred by means of trucks to a private packaging facility in Thirubhuvanai, where the rice is packaged in the sizes of 15kg and 30kg bags.
- ii. The rice bags are transported to various distribution centres located across the Assembly constituencies (currently 10 ACs) through trucks of 10/20 ton capacity. Each constituency is under the supervisory control of a Nodal Officer from PCS Cadre.
- iii. From the Distribution centres, which are mostly schools, the rice bags are further transferred to mini trucks, such as, TATA ACE, etc., for delivering to the Red card holders/the target beneficiaries. At present there are six teams (earlier three teams) for each Assembly Constituency, each team consists of a Team Leader in the rank of Superintendent/Assistant, who is assisted by two team members from the cadre of LDC/UDC and with the help of MTS for loading/unloading of bags.

3. With the above set up, the free rice distribution which has been going on for the past 10 days, has been found to be considerably less than satisfactory due to the following shortfalls observed:

- i. The first and foremost shortfall found in the current system of supply chain is that the current system involves at least 3 points of loading and unloading of rice stock before it reaches the beneficiary, which consumes a lot of time and workman hour thereby drastically reducing the efficiency of the supply chain.
- ii. The current system involves the Superintendents, Assistants, UDCs and LDCs for delivering the rice bags to the target beneficiaries. Since most of the Superintendents and Assistants and other officials are from other departments and the work of delivering the rice bags to the beneficiaries under the harsh environmental conditions is a completely different nature of work to them, they find it very difficult and this impairs the efficiency of the supply chain. Moreover the Ministerial staffs are not thorough with the local areas.
- iii. The loading and unloading of rice bags are being carried out by the MTS, who become tired due to continued long hard working hours which also affects the supply chain efficiency. Moreover it appears that the MTS are inexperienced in loading and unloading of rice bags. Another point to be noted here is that the MTS who are drafted mostly from PWD without drafting their immediate superiors, viz., foreman/supervisors, which makes the control of MTS hard by the Nodal Officers at the Constituency level. Because of this, agitation by MTS have been found at some distribution points.
- iv. Also it is learnt that the maximum capacity in the packaging facility is 400 MT per day. By adopting the current distribution method, it would take nearly 15 day to complete the packing of 7640 MTS as per the Manager, Servo Packers. Further, it would take 15-17 days to complete the distribution (just to cover the rice distribution to red card holders alone). As of now 1200 MT has been distributed in Puducherry. At Karaikal alone, 590 MT has been given as on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and based on Collector Karaikal report to HLG's Audio Briefing, it is learnt that it will take atleast 7 days to complete the task.
- v. Further, the present distribution system would worsen in case if the Government starts distributing pulses @ 1kg to the beneficiaries and free rice to Yellow card holders also @ 10kg per ration card, which would necessitate covering almost all the ration cards across the U.T. of Puducherry. This would take another 15 each to distribute pulses and rice to APL beneficiaries. Practically this exercise would go on till the last week of May 2020.



- vi. It appears that the Civil Supplies Department is more focused in logistics than on free rice distribution to the target beneficiaries. It is to be noted that it is a relief measure which should reach the people speedily and not a routine office work.
- vii. The current system involves huge manpower and financial costs in packing, loading, unloading, etc. It is learnt from the Manager Servo Packers and Mr. Ramesh OSD, during my field visit along with SDM (s) Mr. Shashvat IAS, that the packing materials costs around Rs.30 lakhs and Rs.0.65/- towards the packing charges per kilogram of rice. For 7,640 MTs of free rice, the packing charges comes to around Rs.50 lakhs. Apart from this, costs are involved in transportation charges, labour charges, food charges and huge manpower being involved in the entire distribution. This is a matter of serious concern at this stage when the entire country is facing severe economic crisis and this is even more dangerous to UT of Puducherry as all our revenue resources have been stopped in view of COVID lockdown. It is important to investigate such negligence on this methodology and for causing huge burden on our exchequer.
- viii. Also, around 30 PCS officers, SDMs, Tahsildars, Superintendents, Assistants, LDC, UDC, VAOs, VAs, MTS, etc., are totally involved in this exercise from last one week. Further if the system continues for the distribution of rice of remaining BPL, pulses to BPL, rice to APL, it would take about 2 months and it would compromise the entire administrative set up of all departments. The involvement of such huge manpower itself is detrimental in combating COVID 19.
- ix. The present distribution would be much more disastrous if there is any rainfall, corona case in the area of distribution or in the workforce.
- x. Door-to-Door delivery of free rice to the target beneficiaries is done only in the areas where roads are proper and wider. In the slums or in the rural areas, it is observed that either the MTS is delivering the rice bags door-to-door by hand or the beneficiaries gather around the vehicle and collect the rice bags. These MTS have been called in the morning hours and the work is being carried out till late mid-night. (example: In Yanam the work extended upto 3.00 am). On an average each MTS would carry both 15 kg & 30 kg bags and walk around to the tune of about 10km daily.



The condition is more complex in many slum areas, etc, The cumulative movement of each person exceeds more than 20kms.

Hence such inhuman practice has to be discouraged and who will be responsible if any injury or death happens to any person who is involved in this herculean task. Further it is observed that these MTS are standing in the TATA ACE vehicles under the scorching sun and doing distribution activities. It may lead to health hazards.

- xi. Though free rice is packed in bags, because of the wear and tear of the bags, some spillage is happening. Further it is reported that many vehicles are not reporting in time and this causes further delay in the distribution. Also it is reported that food to the staffs involved in the distribution also not reaches them in time, which further aggravates the situation. In many areas public gather around the vehicles and wait for long for getting the rice bags and this itself defeats the very purpose of door-to-door delivery.



- xii. Also to mention that since the current system of distribution is done in an irregular and non-uniform manner, a needy poor family is forced to wait for about 20 days. This is against the spirit of PMKGY, National Food Security Act and COVID-19 lockdown relief measure. If such inhuman practice is continued then the District Administration would be compelled to initiate appropriate action under the National Food Security Act.
- xiii. As mentioned, as of now distribution has been started in only 10 ACs of this region. Even in these ACs, only few localities have been completed and few localities are going on. This current distribution practice also creates delay of the free rice distribution, law and order problems, non-uniform distribution across the Puducherry U.T., inter-village issues (refer Seliamedu issue), etc.
- xiv. Post 20<sup>th</sup> April lockdown easing and 3<sup>rd</sup> May relaxation, the BPL beneficiaries would go for construction work, MGNREGS activity, industries work and hence the households if found locked on the day of door to door distribution, the beneficiary would lose the rice and the department has not thought about such distributions.
- xv. It is pertinent to note the Undersigned was not involved in making of the SOP for distribution of free rice to the target beneficiaries and the District Administration was not intimated about the news of lifting, distribution of free rice to the target beneficiaries including Mahe and Yanam Regions. The district administration was involved only when the crisis happened for which the district administration acted immediately. Accordingly Police *bandopast*, EMs were deployed and the vehicles were arranged as per the requirement of FCS. Further to help the FCS dept the VAOs/VAs are also involved in this work to ensure smooth distribution of free rice.

4. Since the current system involves huge manpower and costs in packing, transportation, loading and unloading at multiple points, the free rice distribution system needs to be simplified for effective and rapid distribution of rice to the beneficiaries. Hence it is suggested that the free rice distribution may be carried out by the existing system of Fair Price Shops (FPS), which is followed by many State Governments.

5. Some of the prominent advantages of the FPS system are listed below for drafting a more efficient rice distribution system:

- i. There are over 380 FPS shops located across the Puducherry region. Hence the rice from FCI Godown will be loaded in its original 100kg bags and unloaded directly at the FPS shops located at the beneficiary area, from where, the rice can be issued to the beneficiaries by the FPS workers, by following social distancing, as it is being done in the neighbouring states of Tamil

Nadu and Kerala. It is a time-tested and an already established system. The distribution can be monitored in each FPS by deploying Ministerial staff and MTS to check pilferages/ leakages and ensure that free rice bags are delivered properly to the target beneficiaries. Also PCS officers can be given incharge of FPS shops zone/constituency wise to ensure that any sort of misappropriation by anyone doesn't arise in any FPS shops to increase transparency, efficiency and the public perception. The social distancing in FPS shops can be enforced by the Revenue and Police Authorities.

- ii. Because of the strategic location of FPS existing across the district, uniform distribution of free rice can be effected simultaneously in all the Assembly Constituencies and in all the areas within the ACs, so we see each FPS can on an average caters 20 MT and hardly takes 4- 5 days only. (in the current system, whereby only about six FPS areas are covered at present in each of the 10 constituencies.) This will ensure that across Puducherry U.T. the beneficiaries will get the free rice timely and without any delay. So at any single point of time all the eligible households will be benefitted. There would be flexibility for the beneficiaries to approach the FPS.
- iii. Since the FPS employees are well acquainted with the area and the target beneficiary people, this system would very well improve the efficiency of the free rice distribution and also people are well aware of the location of FPS, the modalities etc.,
- iv. It is understood that the FPSs shops now remain closed and the salary has not been paid for many months to the FPS workers, however considering the exigency and current Disaster scenario, the workers of the respective FPSs can be engaged in this disaster time to deliver the free rice to the target beneficiaries. And the Civil Supplies Department can bear the salary expenditure/ honorarium to the FPS workers instead of undergoing huge expenditure like packing costs, transportation costs involved in the current system.
- v. The huge workforce involved in the current system is not required through FPS distribution.
- vi. The distribution can be effected smoothly without violation of essential social distancing by adopting appropriate methods either by informing the beneficiary red card holder through the PA System to come to the respective FPS shops on any given timeslot or by issuing tokens printed with timeslots to the beneficiaries. This flexibility in FPS System is not found in the current distribution system.

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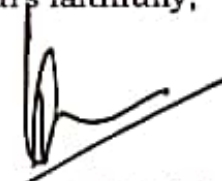


vii. This system can effectively continue even in case the curfew is withdrawn and the free rice benefit is extended to the Yellow card holder as well.

5. It is reiterated that at this critical time of COVID-19 disaster, the relief measure should reach the public immediately without any delay. This current system of distribution leads to inordinate delay thereby defeating the purpose of immediate relief. If the current system is not rectified, there may be chances that the scenario could worsen in the days to come.

6. The above observations are submitted for your kind perusal.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. T. ARUN, I.A.S.)  
District Collector-cum-  
District Magistrate

Copy to:

1. The Development Commissioner, Puducherry.
2. The Secretary (Finance), Puducherry.
3. The Secretary (CS&CA), Puducherry.
4. The PS to Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Puducherry.
5. The PS to Hon'ble Chief Minister, Puducherry.
6. The PS to Hon'ble Welfare Minister, Puducherry.