

Ensure rice at Re.one a kg reaches only the genuine: Dr. JP

Written by

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Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy's decision to supply rice at one rupee a kilogram against the present two rupees is welcome provided the Government ensures that the benefit reaches only the deserving, said Lok Satta Party President Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan today.

In a media statement, Dr. JP pointed out that the extra financial burden on the exchequer because of rice supply at one rupee a kg will be less than 50 percent of the Rs.1000 crore burden the Government has just imposed on the people by raising VAT from four percent to five percent. The burden is bound to go down steeply with the Union Government getting ready to ensure food security to the bulk of the population through the Food Security Act under which rice, wheat and coarse grains will be supplied at Rs.3, Rs. 2 and Rs. 1 a kg respectively.

Dr. JP said that addressing the nutritional security of the poor is certainly welcome if the Government ensures there are no leakages and large-scale corruption in the system. As of today, there are 1.80 crore white cardholders in the State and applications for another 35 lakh cards are pending. If they too get cards, the total number will go up to more than 2.15 crore. On the assumption that each white cardholder family comprises four members, the total number of people eligible to draw subsidized rice comes to 8.6 crore. The State's population according to the 2011 census is only 8.40 crore. The facts highlight the magnitude of the leakages in the system, Dr. JP added.

Dr. JP said that the Government should ensure that the ineligible do not siphon away food grains meant for the poor.

Dr. JP also highlighted that the benefit accruing to the poor through one rupee a kg rice scheme is illusory considering that they pay more and more for the liquor they consume year after year. The State which collects Rs.17000 crore a year by way of excise and other levies on liquor will be spending Rs.3000 crore on rice subsidy by supplying rice at one rupee a kg to all the existing and proposed white cardholders.

The Government should, therefore, make all attempts to wean the poor away from liquor if it were to make any significant impact on their living conditions. It should also focus on imparting the right education and requisite skills and creating employment opportunities so that the poor could stand on their feet and not look to the Government for sustenance.