

Food-for-work to pamper many

More Money For 'Rich' Districts

By Chandrika Mago
& Shivani Singh/TNN

New Delhi: Poor but pampered? The UPA government's new food-for-work programme for the 150 most backward districts, just cleared by the cabinet, will pump money into districts already getting more under other schemes.

But can they absorb the money efficiently? "The idea is to reach a saturation point in these districts," says a source, even though he is himself sceptical of whether the administration in these districts has the capacity to deliver.

Most of the districts identified, say sources, are already getting more money under the massive Sampurna Gramin Rozgar Yojna (SGRY) as well as the newer Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojna (RSVY), which is being extended gradually to cover backward and extremism-affected districts. These are just two examples of schemes.

Bihar and Orissa seemingly benefit even more. They happen to be among the biggest beneficiaries under the new food-for-work plan. In addition,

they already had special separate components under RSVY. Last week, the Union cabinet cleared more districts in these two states for inclusion under RSVY.

Five Andhra districts, too, are common to the food-for-work plan and RSVY. Three districts included in the food-for-work programme now weren't on the RSVY list.

UP, with 21 districts in RSVY, has 15 in the food-for-work plan — 14 are common. MP, with 10 districts in RSVY, has 15 in the food-for-work plan — six are common.

The story is common to other states. Under the new food-for-work plan, Jharkhand has 14 districts, Maharashtra 11, Chhattisgarh 10, Gujarat and West Bengal six each, Karnataka three. Punjab and Haryana have one each, Goa has none.

In addition, the 150 backward districts which will benefit from the food-for-work programme already have a Rs 2,319 crore allocation under SGRY this year.

Under the food-for-work programme, they will get an additional Rs 2,020 crore.