

# Centre Wakes up to Unspent Funds Under MSP, Orders Review of Scheme

**REVAMP MODE** Panel of secretaries has been formed to look into various aspects of implementation

**Nidhi.Sharma**  
@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Saddled with 90% unspent funds under Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFPs), a scheme conceived as NREGA for 1.1 crore tribal families, cabinet secretary P K Sinha has ordered a detailed review of the scheme.

The scheme, which was launched by Congress-led UPA government in 2013-14 financial year, involves fixing MSP for identified minor forest produce, which are collected by tribals in remote areas. These tribals then sell MFPs in village haats. If the market prices fall below MSP, the state government agencies move in to procure the minor forest produce. The scheme also involved setting up of value addition centres at district levels so that tribals can get better rates for the produce collected. Five years after the scheme was introduced, the utilisation statistics remain poor. The Centre had

earmarked ₹1,172 crore for five years till 2018-19. Ministry of tribal affairs statistics reveal that only 11% of the total outlay – about ₹128 crore – has been spent. About ₹360 crore released to state governments are lying unspent in the state coffers. Minor forest produce worth ₹78 crore are lying unsold in state agencies' godowns.

The ministry of tribal affairs has regularly notified MSP for minor

forest produce – bringing in more products under the ambit of the scheme and hiking MSP regularly. However, not a single value addition centre has been set up. The scheme was planned to double or treble the tribal's income and reach 1.1 crore tribal households spread across 307 tribal-dominated districts in 27 states.

As per tribal ministry's estimates, the scheme is operational largely in

9-10 districts. There is no estimate of the number of tribal beneficiaries of the scheme. Seeing the poor utilisation of funds, cabinet secretary has ordered a review. A committee of secretaries has been formed to look into various aspects of imple-



**Centre had earmarked ₹1,172 crore for five years till 2018-19**

mentation and examine how the scheme can be revamped for better utilisation and tribal outreach. The committee includes secretaries from tribal affairs ministry, environment and forest, agriculture, rural development,

panchayati raj and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).

On April 14 last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced from Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district setting up of Van Dhan Vikas Kendra or value addition centres. These would have given a fillip to the scheme.