

The Times of India, Mumbai, 13 Sep 2008

Netas swallow farmers' aid

Affluent Ex-MP, MLAs In Vidarbha Milk Govt Relief Packages

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

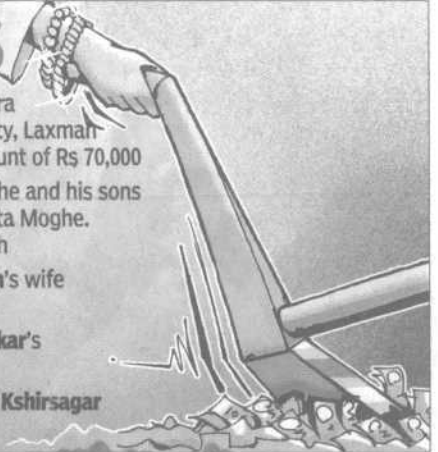
Nagpur: In a bitter twist to the Vidarbha farmers' tragedy, a simple RTI (right to information) query has revealed a huge scam in cash and kind in the CM's and PM's special relief packages.

A six-time former MP and relatives of a sitting MLA besides several former MLAs are among the well-off people who have helped themselves to the relief measures meant for poor, bereaved families in Yavatmal district, the epicentre of the farmers' suicides.

The revelations point to large-scale corruption and irregularities in the implementation of the schemes. Social activist and journalist Vilas Wankhede, who made the RTI query, alleged that undeserving beneficiaries had abused the scheme in which 50% of the cost of purchase of a cow or a buffalo was subsidised by the government. The scheme was meant to help the near and dear ones of those indebted farmers who were the sole breadwinners of their families and who had ended their lives, or other BPL families living along the state dairy's milk procurement route. Its purpose was to enable the distressed families to supplement their income as

THE GOLD-DIGGERS

- Ex-MP **Uttamrao Patil**, wife Sushilabai, sons Rajendra and Manish, and an employee of their education society, Laxman Pawar. Together, they got ten cows with subsidy amount of Rs 70,000
- Ex-minister **Shivajirao Moghe's** brother Anand Moghe and his sons Vijay Moghe, Bharat Moghe and daughter-in-law Sunita Moghe. The family got 8 cows with subsidy of Rs 7,000 on each
- Digras sitting MLA (independent) **Sanjay Deshmukh's** wife and mother got a cow each
- Local Congress leader and ZP member **Suresh Lonkar's** three family members got six cows
- Cattle supplier and contractor of the scheme **Amol Kshirsagar** enlisted as beneficiary and got two cows



farming had become uneconomical in this mainly unirrigated cotton-growing region.

After Wankhede applied for data under the RTI Act, the deputy commissioner of Yavatmal's animal husbandry department provided the list of beneficiaries. While former Congress MP Uttamrao Patil and his family members got ten cows under the subsidy scheme, sitting MLA of Digras Sanjay Deshmukh's wife and mother got a cow each. Ex-minister and former guardian minister of Nagpur district Shivajirao Moghe's near relations got eight cows. Wani ex-MLA Wamanrao Kasawar's four relatives got eight cows, while Congress leader Suresh Lonkar's relatives bagged six.

More suprisingly, the contractor who sup-

plied the cows, Amol Kshirsagar, was himself a beneficiary and got subsidy for two cows. All the leaders belong to the Congress, the NCP or other parties in the ruling alliance.

State BJP president Nitin Gadkari, who introduced Wankhede at a crowded press conference here on Friday, said the RTI data only related to one district. "This is the tip of a scam iceberg, since the packages were to be implemented in six suicide-affected districts of Vidarbha," he said. Demanding a CBI probe into the relief packages, Gadkari also sought the PM's intervention.