

Friday , December 3 , 2010

First steps for service law

SANJEEV KUMAR VERMA



(From left) Deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi and chief minister Nitish Kumar congratulate the newly elected Assembly Speaker Uday Narayan Choudhary (right) on Thursday. Picture by Deepak Kumar

Patna, Dec. 2: The Bihar bureaucracy has begun deliberations to chalk out details of the proposed legislation that seeks to make them more accountable and root out corruption at the grassroots level.

Chief secretary Anup Mukerji today convened a meeting of 12 departmental heads, including those of general administration, health, transport, food and consumer affairs, to discuss which of the services, to begin with, would be brought under the ambit of the proposed legislation, tentatively called Bihar Rajya Sewa Dene Ki Guarantee Vidheyak, or Bihar State Guarantee of Services Bill.

“Today’s discussion veered around services such as social security pensions, scholarships, public distribution system, character verification by police, different types of licences issued by the transport department, drug licences issued by the health department, post-mortem reports issued by hospitals etc,” general administration department principal secretary Deepak Kumar told **The**

Telegraph after today’s meeting.

Kumar said these are the most common services availed by the people and the government should therefore ensure an efficient delivery system.

The legislation was among the chief minister’s first announcements soon after taking over for a new term. The law would come in handy in weeding out bureaucratic red-tape and corruption — two areas where his previous government earned negative points. Officials would have to complete their work within a specified time once the Act comes into existence. If they don’t, they can be penalised and face the threat of administrative action.

Secretary Deepak Kumar said the deliberations had just begun and many more rounds of such meetings would be held in the coming days for discussing the issues threadbare and also to bring more services within the ambit of the legislation.

The bill is likely to be placed in the Assembly during the budget session, expected to begin in March.

Kumar said there would be no limit to the number of services that could be brought under the ambit of the bill. The proposed law would also include an enabling provision which would allow the government to bring any number of services under its ambit by issuing notifications.

“The government intends to table the bill in the legislature in the budget session. Efforts are being made to ready it well in advance so that if any changes are suggested before it is tabled, they could be incorporated,” a highly placed government source said.

He said several points from a similar bill, which was prepared by the Madhya Pradesh government earlier, has been included in the draft legislation. “The bill meant for Bihar, however, would have many changes,” the source said.