

# State counters plan panel job

**SANJEEV KUMAR VERMA**

Patna, Dec. 27: State rural development minister Nitish Mishra today released a detailed document to counter Planning Commission adviser N.C. Saxena's charge that the Bihar government could not spend central funds for rural schemes.

"Late release of funds, with a major chunk coming towards the end of the financial year, proves to be a major handicap in utilising funds," the document read.

Saxena had recently taken a dig at the Nitish Kumar government for not being able to spend funds that the state received from the Centre for schemes to be taken up under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA).

The document released by Mishra had data of the past three fiscals to substantiate the state's stand and counter what Saxena had to say.

"While Rs 440 crore of the total Rs 1,306 crore MNREGA fundd came in February-



Nitish Mishra (top)  
and NC Saxena

March 2008-09, the corresponding figures for the 2009-10 financial year were Rs 383 crore and Rs 1,032 crore respectively. The trend in 2010-11 was almost similar. The centre released Rs 608 crore in February-March of the total sanction of Rs. 2103 crore," the doc-

ument stated.

It also mentioned stoppage of funds to a district by the Centre if even one complaint was filed against one or more schemes or if there is an audit-related objection pertaining to a panchayat or a block.

The minister, through the document, raised issues related to banking infrastructure. He said lack of banking infrastructure in rural Bihar was turning out to be a handicap in timely submission of utilisation certificate and raising demands for fresh funds.

"Accounts of many job card-holders have been opened in post offices because of lack of banking facilities. As post offices have not been linked with core banking services, it takes a lot of time for the amounts to be cleared and sent to the beneficiaries' accounts," the document said.

It added that MNREGA expenditure in Bihar has gone up from Rs 1,305 crore in 2008-09 to Rs 2632 crore in 2010-11. The figure stood at Rs 1817 crore in 2009-10.