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A Messiah for remote Haryana villages

To bridge the gap between the administration and people, an IAS officer has taken his first step towards change. Chander Shekhar, IAS (HR: 05), along with his officers, has initiated a night camping programme in the remote villages of Haryana to get a better view of their problems. Being committed towards appreciating the good work and efforts of officers, **Bureaucracy Today** decided to include this officer in its **Bureaucrat of the month** column.

Chander Shekhar believes that there are three major factors which have helped him take new initiatives during his less-than-four-month tenure as Deputy Commissioner of Kaithal district. They are availability, accessibility, and credibility. He says, "I have asked my officers in the district to be accessible to the public and complete their projects in a time-bound manner. I have already conducted *sammelans* of *sarpanches*, *namberdars*, *patwaris* and *gram sachivs* in four out of six Blocks in Kaithal district."

Shekhar, a Master in Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, US, was posted as Deputy Commissioner, Kaithal, in May 2012. He recalls, "When I was posted here I found that there was lot of communication gap among the Deputy Commissioner, district officers and people. The night camping programme was the first step in that direction and perhaps the first of its kind in India. The first camp was organised at Ahun village in Pundri Block on August 8, 2012. The objective was to discuss the micro level problems with the Gram Panchayat and the rural people."

The officers, including the Additional Deputy Commissioner, the District Development Officer and the



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CHANDER SHEKHAR,
Deputy Commissioner of Kaithal

Panchayat Officer, provided the details of different schemes like the MGNREG scheme, the Swaran Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana and the Mahatma Gandhi Gramin Basti Yojana initiated for the people of Ahun. He adds, "Social welfare schemes like those of Old Age Pension and Widow Pension, for handicapped and financially assisted destitute children and the Indira Priyadarshani Shagun Yojana were also discussed. The cases of eligible beneficiaries were decided and 11 beneficiaries were handed over bank drafts under the Indira Priyadarshani Shagun Yojana."

The night camping programme is organised twice a month in the villages.

All heads of departments related to the concerned village are informed in advance to review the status of ongoing projects. Shekhar says, "We have directed departments to disburse cheques and bank drafts to the beneficiaries of social welfare schemes on the spot. Every department has to be ready with its status report and futuristic plans a day before the visit of its officers to a village for the night camping programme."

The second camp was organised at Budhakhera village in Kaithal Block on August 24. During this camp, the Health Department, the DC says, medically examined 512 persons. An HIV Test was conducted on 36 persons. Immunization vaccine was administered to 22 children and four pregnant ladies. The AYUSH Department also examined 177 persons and provided medicines on the spot. During this camp, three families were given cheques under the Indira Awas Yojana and five beneficiaries were given bank drafts under the Indira Priyadarshani Shagun Yojana on the spot. The second night camping programme gained more response from the rural people.

Speaking about his focus, Chander Shekhar says, "My priority areas are rural development, health, education and social welfare programmes." ■

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