

**Visit Notes of V.Srinivas, IAS Chairman Board of Revenue for Rajasthan Ajmer to the districts of Nagaur, Bikaner, Sriganganagar, Churu, Jhunjhunu and Sikar dated June 12, 2018 to June 15, 2018**

I undertook an official visit from June 12, 2018 to June 15, 2018 to 7 districts of Nagaur, Bikaner, SriGanganar, Churu, Jhunjhunu and Sikar for the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign, inspections of the District Collector Offices and Meetings with the District Bar Associations. The Revenue Minister also scheduled his visits to the same Revenue Camps on these dates.

The following are the salient observations of my visit.

**1. Visit to District Nagaur Dated June 12, 2018**

**Meeting with District Bar Association:** I met the District Bar Association in District Collector Office Nagaur. This was my second meeting with the Nagaur District Bar Association, the previous meeting was in November 2017. The meeting was well attended with over 100 advocates participating in the discussions. The Senior Advocates of the Nagaur District Bar Association raised 4 issues for my consideration: (a) The NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign must focus cases u/s 251 Rajasthan Tenancy Act 1955; (b) Field inspection to be mandated for cases u/s 82 Rajasthan Land Revenue Act 1956 - Reference Cases filed by District Collector with the Board of Revenue in pursuance of the Hon'ble High Court Judgment in CWP Abdul Rehman vs State of Rajasthan; (c) Appointment of a Revenue Appellate Authority to hear first appeals in pursuance of the campaign; (d) Partition of Holdings in cases u/s 53 Rajasthan Tenancy Act 1955 by Meats and Bounds to be done in the presence of Tehsildar. Some of the advocates mentioned on the streamlining of SMS facility for advocates for all cases listed for the day instead of only for new admissions.

In my address, I appraised the view taken by the Larger Bench of the Board of Revenue which I had chaired in the case of Ali Sher vs State of Rajasthan which held that the judgment of the Hon'ble High Court in the case of Abdul Rehman vs State of Rajasthan would be binding on the Board of Revenue. The Board of Revenue had received 11000 reference cases from across Rajasthan and in pursuance of the Larger Bench judgment nearly 7000 cases were decided since December 2017 till May 2018 and we had only 4000 cases that remained to be decided. If any litigant was aggrieved by the Decision of the Board of Revenue, the option of a writ petition before the Hon'ble High Court remained open. The Board of Revenue would not order a field inspection in these cases. On the Rights of Easement cases being taken up in the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign, it was pointed out that while we try to dispose off cases in the Field during the campaign, pending matters would be taken up in regular judicial hearings. There are concerns on the low levels of disposal in Rights of Easement cases u/s 251 of the Rajasthan Tenancy Act is largely due to the contested nature of these cases. As regards partition of holdings, the Board of Revenue

has directed that the Tehsildar will visit the disputed land for partition of holdings by means and bounds.

**Visit to Village Rohini, Tehsil Nagaur:** I visited Village Rohini, Tehsil Nagaur which is about 50 kms away from Nagaur, in the heartland of Thar desert for the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign. The camp was well attended, and the progress achieved by the Revenue Department, the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department, as also the other participating Departments was significant. The benefits disbursed included decrees in mutual agreement cases, abadi pattas, improved seed kits of bajra, pension benefits for contractual labor and ujwala gas connections. The camp was also merged with the Loan Waiver camp and loan waiver certificates were distributed to several beneficiaries.

The Revenue Minister launched the RCMS software on E-Mitra Plus Platform from the AtalSewa Kendra, Village Rohini. It is a significant step forward in digitalization of Rural Rajasthan. The RCMS on E-Mitra Plus Platform provides access to litigants at village level to case status of 917 Revenue Courts of Rajasthan and contains case records of 5.74 lac revenue court cases and 2.15 lac judgments. The E-Mitra Plus Facility with the RCMS provides litigants with a degree of transparency that was not hitherto available regarding the functioning of revenue courts of Rajasthan. It is no longer possible to cover sub-optimal performance with mere number jugglery.

Shri Kumar Pal Gautam District Collector Nagaur contributed significantly to the launch of the RCMS on E-Mitra Plus facility. By leading from the front, he ensured that revenue courts of the State remained an integral part of the larger movement for Digital Rajasthan. I acknowledge his leadership contribution to this initiative.

## **2. Visit to District Bikaner dated June 12-13, 2018**

**Meeting with Revenue Officers:** This was my 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Bikaner District Collector's Office – my 1<sup>st</sup> visit was on 15/12/2017. There were important issues pertaining to Revenue administration of my 1<sup>st</sup> visit which needed follow-up in this meeting. The Colonization Commissioner and District Collector Bikaner informed me that coordination meetings were held between Colonization and District Administration to address the incomplete records of 654 chaks transferred from Colonization to Revenue Department. The Departments flagged 17 issues for my consideration which were resolved after discussions.

Bikaner district has 8975 revenue cases in SDO Courts. The number may seem less than the number of cases in Bharatpur and Alwar, but certain Courts like ACM Bikaner are showing high case-loads. For some inexplicable reason, the case disposal of ACM Bikaner was the lowest amongst all revenue courts in the district, so low that it appears that the Court is virtually dysfunctional and the said official was advised to conduct court work with greater seriousness of purpose. The SDO's were advised to conduct court work 3 days/ week and ACM's to conduct court work 5 days/ week. The District Collector was advised to monitor case-status in Revenue Officers' meetings – cases listed for Admission, Written Statement,

Issues, Evidence, Arguments, Preliminary Decree, Field Report and Final Decree. They were also advised on the need to move cases from incomplete to complete stage, and the importance of recording evidences of all witnesses on the day listed for evidence.

It was observed that none of the SDO's of Bikaner district had submitted the annual performance appraisal reports and they were advised to expedite submission of APAR's for 2017-18.

Bikaner is not amongst the front ranking districts of the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign. I urged the Revenue Officers to enhance their focus on the campaign targets in the coming days so that improved performance levels are witnessed.

**Meeting with District Bar Association:** I addressed a full meeting hall of advocates of the District Bar Association Bikaner who flagged the following issues –(a) Increase the number of days of sittings of circuit bench of Bikaner from 3 to 4 days; (b) The Divisional Commissioner to be incorporated as an ex-officio Member of the Board of Revenue for constitution of a Double Bench in Bikaner; (c) Improve the Quality of Judgment Writing in SDO Courts; (d) The Circuit Bench in Bikaner to hear cases of entire Bikaner division and not merely Bikaner district. In my address to the District Bar Association, I informed them that the Board of Revenue had placed a lot of emphasis on Quality of Judgment Writing for SDO Courts and 5 workshops were conducted in this regard. The Board would continue to seek support from the Revenue Bar Association to help improve the quality of work in SDO Courts. I also informed them that while the Board of Revenue had responded to most issues flagged by the District Bar Association in January 2018, I was willing to take a relook if any structural changes in the functioning of the Board of Revenue with regard to the circuit bench were necessary.

**Inspection of District Collector Bikaner:** I inspected the office of District Collector Bikaner. There is a major issue of revenue recoveries of Rs. 243 crores from Airport Authority of India for lands transferred to Nal Airport that necessitates higher level intervention. I exchanged views on the administration of transferred colony areas, given that the number of sub-divisions in the district has increased from 2 to 8.

Night Halt at Circuit House Bikaner.

**Dated June 13, 2018**

**Visit to NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign at Village Gaarabdesar, Tehsil Lunkaransar:** Gaarabdesar is the last village of Tehsil Lunkaransar on the border of Churu District. It took us quite an effort to reach the village on roads under expansion. The camp was very well organized and the collective efforts of Revenue and Panchayati Raj Departments was visible through large participation and high disposal of cases. The Revenue Minister inaugurated the RCMS on E-Mitra Platform and downloaded one judgment of District Collector dated 22/5/2018 on the E-Mitra Plus facility. There is widespread acknowledgement that the

initiative will provide considerable transparency to Revenue Court administration in Rajasthan. The subsidies were disbursed in an orderly manner. The Revenue Minister advised the people to avail the benefits of the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign.

The District Collector Shri N.K. Gupta played a critical leadership role in the launch of the RCMS on E-Mitra Plus platform, and his performance in accepting the technology innovation is acknowledged.

**Visit to NyayAapkeDwar 2018 Campaign at Village Oadki, Tehsil SriGanganagar:** I reached village Oadki Tehsil Sriganganagar at 5 pm, the camp was well attended. The Revenue Minister along with the MLA Sadulshahar addressed the well-attended camp. The District Collector SriGanganagar briefed on the issues coming up in the Camps in SriGanganagar district. The issues of an irrigated, well settled command area are vastly different from the barani areas of Western Rajasthan. There were a lot of cases for Right of Easement, and despite the Morabba wise demarcation of village path to the holdings, land sales/ partition of holdings have created the need for demarcation of village paths in the morabba. The procedural necessity of hearing all co-tenants meant that not too many cases could be decided in the camp itself and further hearings were necessitated to decide summary cases. There were also a great many number of NFSA card requests and caste certificates. District Collector SriGanganagar informed me that the RCMS on E-Mitra Plus facility has been commenced in the district.

The significant achievement in the Gang Command areas is the modernization of the water course outlets and water courses with MGNREGA funds. The policy intervention to modernize the watercourses of Gang and Bhakra command systems was a felt need and resulted in considerable water savings in the region.

Night Halt at Circuit House SriGanganagar.

**Dated June 14, 2018**

**Inspection of District Collector Office/ Meeting with Revenue Officers:** The District Collector Office is well organized and functional. The case work of the district has 7500 revenue suits. The value of lands is significantly higher and hence litigation is prolonged and a number of appeals are being filed in Board of Revenue from Sri Ganganagar. The nature of revenue suits being witnessed pertain to rights of girl child in the ancestral property, evacuee property lands and regular cases of partition and declaratory rights. The SDO Sri Ganganagar mentioned that a lot of the SDO's time is being consumed by routine work of issuing caste certificates and NFSA certificates – subjects which could be delegated back to the Department of Social Welfare and the Food Department. He also flagged the issue on the non-applicability of provisions of Rajasthan Tenancy Act on the evacuee property lands and mentioned that cognizance in some cases was taken under Rajasthan Tenancy Act in the 1<sup>st</sup> Appellate Court.

**Meeting with Advocates:** The meeting with advocates raised the issue of predictability and consistency of sittings of SDO Courts and the need for cordial bench-bar relations.

The one important issue being flagged in the Revenue Campaign in Sri Ganganagar is the demarcation of village paths u/s 251 of Rajasthan Tenancy Act. It has been flagged across every district in the State. The Board of Revenue will advise the District Collectors to lay special focus on cases under this section.

**Meeting with Revenue Officers at Hanumangarh:** I met District Collector and the Revenue Officers of Hanumangarh District in a luncheon meeting and discussed the progress of the Revenue Campaign. Hanumangarh District – abundant in canal water, rich irrigated lands, planned settlements in abadi areas – is the best performing district under the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign in Bikaner division. The District Collector flagged the urgent need for posting of Sub-Registrars in the district.

**Inspection of District Collector Office Churu:** I inspected the District Collector Office Churu, the first inspection by Chairman Board of Revenue since 1955. I interacted with the Office staff, Advocates and met the representatives of the PatwarSangh/ ILR Sangh. I observed a high pendency of disciplinary action cases in the District and requested the District Collector to expedite decision making in the pending cases. The land records of the district are well maintained and revenue section is well organized. The Minister for Rural Development ShriRajendraRathore spoke to me on telephone on arrival to Churu and advised that the focus of the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign in Churu district should be on cases of right of easement and abadipattas. This request is in consonance with similar proposals that I received from other senior ministers in the State during my district visits from May 1, 2018.

**Meeting with District Bar Association Churu:** It was a really good meeting with the District Revenue Bar Association Churu. When an authority is not seen in the District for such a long period of time, there is always curiosity about the existence and functional need and the meeting was very well-attended. The District Bar Association flagged the issue of camp court by RAA Bikaner in Churu as it was very inconvenient to reach for many litigants. The District Bar Association also requested for filling up the vacancy of RAA Churu expeditiously.

Night Halt at Circuit House Churu.

**Dated June 15, 2018**

**Inspection of District Collector Office Jhunjhunu:** I inspected the District Collector Office Jhunjhunu – the first inspection by Chairman Board of Revenue and observed that it's a very high litigation district, with 11500 cases pending in SDO Courts and ACM courts. The court work of SDO courts needs greater monitoring and the District Collector was advised to follow-up with Revenue Officers meetings on a timely basis. I have also advised the Member of the Board of Revenue In-Charge of the District to conduct an inspection of all SDO Courts

in July 2018 and a follow-up meeting at Chairman's level to be convened in August 2018. A lot of hard work and enhanced supervision is necessary to ensure efficient functioning of court work in District Jhunjhunu.

**Meeting with District Bar Association Jhunjhunu:** Over 500 advocates of the District Bar Association attended my address. They expressed serious concerns on judicial processes not being followed in SDO Courts and the need to train readers better to ensure smooth conduct of court work. They also emphasized on the need for longer court sittings to ensure all witnesses coming to SDO Courts complete their evidence during court sittings and are not called back once again. The focus of the District Bar Association members was entirely on strengthening trial court performance. There is a need to develop software solutions for effective monitoring of trial courts in the district and across the State. The proliferation of SDO Courts and the widening span of control has made it difficult for District Collectors to supervise effectively.

**Visit to NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign at Village Navalda, Tehsil Navalgarh:** The Revenue Campaign in Navalda was well attended and the Revenue Minister inaugurated the RCMS on E-Mitra Facility. The Revenue Minister also distributed benefits from various schemes to the beneficiaries. The contribution of Shri Indra Singh Member Board of Revenue and Shri Dinesh Yadav to the launching of the RCMS on E-Mitra Facility in Navalda is acknowledged.

**Meeting with Revenue Officers and District Collector Sikar:** I reviewed the progress of the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign with District Collector Sikar, RAA Sikar and ADM Sikar. The campaign is progressing well. Large number of cases for correction of entries are being filed and disposed off.

### **Conclusion:**

I have completed 7 weeks of travel in Rajasthan, in which period I have covered a distance of 8000 kms, visiting 30 districts with 15 night halts across the State from Dholpur to Barmer and from Banswada to Sri Ganganagar. I have met nearly 60,000 farmers, 7000 advocates and 5000 officials during my visits. Nearly 22 lac cases have been disposed by Revenue Courts from May 1, 2018 to June 15, 2018. The numbers are staggering and it can be said that the NyayAapkeDwar 2018 campaign is one of the successful and beneficial programs administered by the Government of Rajasthan.

There is a lot of follow-up work that needs to be pursued:

1. Enhanced supervision of SDO Courts is necessary. In this regard, Members of Board of Revenue would be advised to plan inspection visits to cover every SDO Court in their Districts and complete inspections by end July 2018

2. Monitoring of SDO Courts sittings and case wise status is a felt need. There are too many complaints of irregular sittings and mounting case work that are coming about the performance of trial courts.
3. The Board of Revenue would need to issue circulars on the quality of Judgment writing of Trial Courts. The circulars for improved functioning of SDO Courts would be issued shortly.
4. Workshops for Improving Functioning of SDO Courts in all District Head Quarters would be held in July 2018.
5. Training of Readers and creation of a separate cadre of Readers would also be pursued.
6. The Board of Revenue would take up with Government the appointment of RAA's in Ajmer and Churu.

While significant reforms have been launched in the Functioning of Revenue Courts and improvements are being witnessed, the road-map ahead has to remain reform oriented and closely monitored.

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