Jabalpur: PDS ration stocked in warehouses in Madhya Pradesh’s Balaghat and Mandla districts is “suitable only for goats and sheep”, the Centre has written to the state.

The ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution has asked the MP government to withhold further distribution of rice stocks across the state.

“They are unfit for human consumption,” says a report sent by the ministry to principal secretary, department of food and civil supplies, in MP.

A team led by a deputy commissioner had inspected depots of state agencies and fair-price shops in Balaghat and Mandla from July 30 to August 2 this year. It collected 32 samples — 31 from depots and one from a ration shop — which were analysed in NABL-accredited Central Grain Analysis Laboratory (CGAL), Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi. It is the referral lab for SAARC countries as well, said officials.

“Analysis found that all 32 samples were not just beyond the rejection limit, as per the uniform specifications issued by the ministry, but also beyond PFA standards as per FSSAI,” reads the report, a copy of which is with TOI. “Stocks are found to be unfit for human consumption and in the category of ‘feed’ — suitable for livestock such as goat, horse, sheep and poultry,” adds the report.

According to the records of godowns, the stocks from where samples were drawn were procured in May-July 2020 while the condition of the stock represents a different picture altogether, says the report sent by ministry’s deputy commissioner Vishwajeet Haldar.

‘Stocks 100% recycled, grave lapses in quality of rice’

The stocks are 100% recycled old stocks and the gunny bags used for storage are also at least two to three years old,” he adds, pointing out that sample analysis clearly depicts “grave shortcomings in the quality of rice”.

“There have been grave lapses by district officers, officials and authorities in the entire
channel from procurement to distribution. The personnel need to be identified and proceedings may be initiated against them under PFA/ FSSAI Act,” he said.

The ministry has asked the state government to blacklist the rice millers involved in delivery of such stocks with immediate effect. In this context, concern has arisen regarding the other stocks in Madhya Pradesh, said Haldar, adding: “It is requested to withhold rice stocks available in the depots till further investigation and re-categorization”.

The MP government has been asked to submit an action taken report at the earliest to the ministry.