



Temporary Ration Cards to Access PDS Foodgrain

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Why in News

Recently, the Pune Zilla Parishad has decided to provide **temporary 'ration cards'** to more than 80,000 **undocumented people** in the district, so they can receive foodgrains under the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**.

- The delivery of benefits including **PDS grain to migrants** trapped by the lockdown, and to those who are **unable to provide documents**, has been a major concern across states.
- Earlier, **Nobel Laureates Amartya Sen and Abhijit Banerjee, and former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan** had suggested that **temporary ration cards** should be issued to enable the undocumented to draw rations through the PDS system.

Key Points

- It is a **first innovation** of its kind to help larger numbers of people access government benefits during the **Covid-19 lockdown**.
- **Use of Aadhaar:** The Pune scheme will use one-time **Aadhaar authentication** to open accounts for the people with the **India Post Payments Bank**.
Once the biometric Aadhaar-based link is established and the account is opened, this would serve as the only authentication that will be needed for these undocumented people to draw rations from the PDS system.
- **Home Delivery:** It will enable the home delivery of grains at the gram panchayat level to avoid crowds and maintain physical distancing.
- **Coverage:** It will also include individuals belonging to the **Primitive Tribes** and the **transgender community** who are often left out of the ambit of such benefits.

- **Identification:** The job of identifying the beneficiaries has been given to the **village police patil**, who maintains records of outsiders in a register.
Under the **National Food Security Act** (NFSA), 2013, the gram sabha has the right to identify beneficiaries — however, in the current situation when the gram sabha is not functional, **a committee of three viz., the gram panchayat's sarpanch, a member of the gram sabha, and the local police patil will identify them.**
- **Verification:** The only verification that will be carried out is that of the kitchen of the beneficiary to prove that they qualify for the scheme.
- **Boost to Sharad Bhojan Yojana:** The scheme will widen and deepen the scope and reach of the Sharad Bhojan Yojana, under which cooked meals are provided to people in Pune district at concessional rates.
The Sharad Bhojan Yojana is modelled after the Maharashtra government's flagship **Shiv Bhojan Yojana**, which serves subsidised meals to the poor.
- **Involvement of a Corporate:** The **Janakidevi Bajaj Gram Vikas Sansthan**, the **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) wing of the Bajaj Group**, will be the corporate CSR partner of the Pune Zilla Parishad for the scheme.

Public distribution system (PDS)

- The **PDS is an Indian food Security System** established **under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.**
- PDS evolved as a **system of management of scarcity** through distribution of food grains at affordable prices.
- PDS is operated under the **joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments.**
 - The **Central Government**, through Food Corporation of India (FCI), has assumed the responsibility for **procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation** of food grains to the State Governments.
 - The **operational responsibilities** including allocation within the State, identification of eligible families, **issue of Ration Cards** and supervision of the functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) etc., rest with the **State Governments.**
- Under the PDS, presently the commodities namely **wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene** are being allocated to the States/UTs for distribution. Some States/UTs also distribute additional items of mass consumption through the PDS outlets such as pulses, edible oils, iodized salt, spices, etc.

National Food Security Act (NFSA)

- NFSA, 2013 legally entitles up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized food grains under the Targeted Public Distribution System.

- The eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is mandated to be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing ration cards under the Act.

Source: IE