



## PM Poshan Scheme

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the **Prime Minister POSHAN scheme or PM-POSHAN for providing one hot cooked meal in Government and Government-aided schools.**

- The scheme will **replace the existing national programme for mid-day meal in schools or Mid-day Meal Scheme.**
- It has been launched for an **initial period of five years (2021-22 to 2025-26).**

### Mid-day Meal Scheme

- The Mid-day Meal Scheme (**under the Ministry of Education**) is a **centrally sponsored scheme** which was **launched in 1995.**
- It is considered as the **world's largest school meal programme** aimed to attain the goal of universalization of primary education.
- **Provides cooked meals to every child** within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII who enrolls and attends the school.
- If the Mid-Day Meal is not provided in school on any school day due to non-availability of food grains or any other reason, the State Government shall pay **food security allowance** by 15<sup>th</sup> of the succeeding month.

### Key Points

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- **PM POSHAN:**

- **Coverage:**

- The scheme will cover 11.8 crore students enrolled in **classes 1 to 8** in over 11.2 lakh schools across the country.

**Primary (1-5) and upper primary (6-8) schoolchildren** are currently entitled to 100 grams and 150 grams of food grains per working day each, to ensure a minimum of 700 calories.

- The scheme will be **extended to students studying in pre-primary or Balvatikas** running in government and government aided primary schools.

**Balvatika** is the pre-school that was started in government schools last year to include **children aged younger than six years** in the formal education system.

- **Nutritional Gardens:**

The government will **promote nutritional gardens** in schools. The gardens are being provided **to offer additional micro-nutrients to students.**

- **Supplementary Nutrition:**

The new scheme has a provision for **supplementary nutrition for children in aspirational districts** and those with high prevalence of **anaemia**.

- It **does away with the restriction on the part of the Centre** to provide funds only for wheat, rice, pulses and vegetables.
- Currently, if a state decides to add any component like milk or eggs to the menu, the Centre does not bear the additional cost. Now that restriction has been lifted.

- **Tithi Bhojan Concept:**

- The concept of **TithiBhojan** will be encouraged extensively.
- TithiBhojan is a **community participation programme** in which people provide special food to children on special occasions/festivals.

- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):**

- The central government will ensure **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) from states to schools**, which will use it to cover cooking costs.

Earlier money was allocated to the states, which then included their share of the money before sending it to a nodal midday meal scheme authority at district and tehsil levels.

- This is to **ensure no leakages at the level of district administration** and other authorities.

- **Nutrition Expert:**

**A nutrition expert is to be appointed in each school** whose responsibility is to ensure that health aspects such as Body Mass Index (BMI), weight and haemoglobin levels are addressed.

- **Social Audit of the Scheme:**
  - A **social audit of the scheme has also been mandated** for each school in each state to study the implementation of the scheme, which was so far not being done by all states.
  - The **Ministry of Education** will also **engage college and university students** to monitor the scheme at a local level.
- **Fund Sharing:**

The **Centre will bear Rs. 54,061 crore** of the total estimated cost of Rs 1.3 lakh crore, with the **states paying Rs 31,733 crore** (Rs 45,000 crore will be released by the Centre as subsidies for food grains).
- **Vocal for Local for Atmanirbhar Bharat:**
  - Involvement of **Farmers Producer Organizations (FPO)** and **Women Self Help Groups** in implementation of the scheme will be encouraged.
  - Use of locally grown traditional food items for a fillip to local economic growth will be encouraged.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Meeting Nutrition Targets:**

As per the **Global Nutrition Report 2020**, India is among 88 countries that are likely to miss global nutrition targets by 2025.
  - **Serious 'Hunger' Level:**

India has been ranked at 94 among 107 countries in the **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020**. India has a level of hunger that is "serious".
  - **Menace of Malnutrition:**
    - According to the **National Family Health Survey-5**, several states across the country have reversed course and recorded worsening levels of child malnutrition.
    - India is home to about 30% of the world's stunted children and nearly 50% of severely wasted children under the age of five.
  - **Others:**

Corrupt practices and Caste Bias and Discrimination in serving food.

**Source: IE**