Midday Meal Scheme

The Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has received 35 complaints from 15 States and Union Territories (UTs) regarding substandard food quality in mid-day meals in the past three years.

- The Midday Meal Scheme comes under the HRD Ministry's Department of School Education and Literacy.
- Launched in the year 1995 as a **centrally sponsored scheme**, it provides that every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in **classes I to VIII** who enrolls and attends the school, shall be provided **hot cooked meal** having nutritional standards of 450 calories and 12 gm of protein for primary (I- V class) and 700 calories and 20 gm protein for upper primary (VI-VIII class), free of charge every day except on school holidays.
- The scheme covers all **government and government aided schools** and also Madarsa and Maqtabs supported under the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** (SSA).
- The last Mid Day Meal Rules were notified in the year 2015 under the **National Food Security Act, 2013** but amendments have been made from time to time.
- The rules provide that
    - The place of serving meals to the children shall be school only.
    - The meal shall be prepared in accordance with the Mid Day Meal guidelines issued by the Central Government from time to time.
    - The latest guidelines provide instructions on procuring AGMARK quality items for preparation of midday meals, tasting of meals by two or three adult members of the school management committee, including at least one teacher, before serving to children.
    - 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 15th of the succeeding month.
    - The School Management Committee mandated under **Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** shall also monitor implementation of the Mid-day meal Scheme.
    - The **State Steering-cum Monitoring Committee (SSMC)** shall oversee the implementation of the scheme including establishment of a mechanism for maintenance of nutritional standards and quality of meals.
- The government provides **financial support** to the eligible schools/implementing agencies in the form of free food grains and by bearing cooking related costs.

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