



Mains Marathon

Day 11: "National Scheme for PM Poshan Shakti Nirman is meant to curb malnutrition among children of weaker sections and to ensure their presence at school". In this context discuss the significance of the scheme. (150 words)

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Approach / Explanation / Answer

- Start your answer by giving an overview of PM Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)
- Discuss the significance of PM POSHAN
- Discuss Challenges associated with the Scheme
- Conclude your answer by giving a way forward

Answer

In September 2021, the Union Cabinet approved the **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman or PM-POSHAN** for providing one hot cooked meal in **Government and Government-aided schools** with the financial outlay of **Rs 1.31 trillion**.

The scheme **replaced the national programme for midday meal in schools** or Midday Meal Scheme.

It has been launched for an initial period of **five years (2021-22 to 2025-26)**.

Significance of PM-POSHAN

- **Coverage:**
 - 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.
 - It also covers **students of balvatikas (children in the 3-5-year age group)** from pre-primary classes.
 - This provision in the scheme will help in ensuring the attendance of the children at school
- **Nutritional Gardens:** Use of locally grown nutritional food items will be encouraged from "**school nutrition gardens**" will help in boosting the local economic growth, and will also include involvement of **Farmers Producer Organizations (FPO)** and **Women Self Help Groups** in the implementation of the scheme.
- **Supplementary Nutrition:** The scheme has a provision for **supplementary nutrition for children in aspirational districts** and those with a high prevalence of **anaemia**.
 - It will help in curbing the prevalence of anemia in vulnerable groups and ensure their healthy growth.

- **Tithi Bhojan Concept:** The concept is unique in its design as the involvement of the whole community would lead to growing feelings of compassion and empathy towards the downtrodden section of society.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** The Centre has directed the states and the UTs to switch to **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system** for providing compensation to the cooks and helpers working under the scheme. It will help in preventing leakage and corruption.
- **Nutrition Expert:** A nutrition expert appointed in each school whose responsibility is to ensure that health aspects such as Body Mass Index (BMI), weight and haemoglobin levels are addressed. It will help in better accessing the outcomes of the scheme and adjusting the diet according to the findings.
- **Social Audit of the Scheme:** The provision of the social audit will help in curbing problems like corruption and help in tackling the issue of accountability.

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.

Way Forward

- Looking at this data related to the nutrition of children, it is **imperative to push for convergence of health and nutrition programmes** right from pregnancy until the child reaches five years of age.
- A **well-planned and effective Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) strategy** is essential since behaviors are ingrained in society and in family traditions.
- **Effective monitoring and implementation of programmes** to address malnutrition and prioritizing the reduction of child undernutrition in the national development agenda is the need of the hour.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/mains-marathon-daily-answer-writing-practice/papers/2022/national-scheme-pm-poshan-shakti-nirman-curb-malnutrition-children-weaker-sections-ensure-presence-school-discuss-significance-scheme-paper-2-social-justice/print>