One Nation, One Ration Card System

Why in news?

Finance Minister recently announced the national rollout of a 'One Nation, One Ration Card' system in all states and UTs by March 2021.

What is the current practice?

- Under the National Food Security Act, 2013, about 81 crore persons are entitled to buy subsidized foodgrains -
    i. rice at Rs 3/kg
    ii. wheat at Rs 2/kg
    iii. coarse grains at Re 1/kg
- This is receivable from their designated Fair Price Shops (FPS) of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).
- Currently, about 23 crore ration cards have been issued to nearly 80 crore beneficiaries of NFSA in all states and UTs.
- In the present system, a ration cardholder can buy foodgrains only from an FPS that has been assigned to her in the locality in which she lives.

What is the 'One Nation, One Ration Card' system?

- Under this, a beneficiary will be able to buy subsidised foodgrains from any FPS across the country.
- Based on a technological solution, a beneficiary will be identified through biometric authentication.
- This will be done with the electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices installed at the FPSs.
- The person can purchase the quantity of foodgrains to which she is entitled under the NFSA.

How will 'ration card portability' work?

- Ration card portability is aimed at providing intra-state as well as inter-state portability of ration cards.
- The Integrated Management of PDS (IM-PDS) portal would provide the technological platform for the inter-state portability of ration cards.
- This would enable a migrant worker to buy foodgrains from any FPS across the country.

- The other portal (annavitran.nic.in) hosts the data of distribution of foodgrains through E-PoS devices within a state.
- The Annavitran portal enables a migrant worker or his family to avail the benefits of PDS outside their district but within their state.
- A person can buy her share of foodgrains as per her entitlement under the NFSA, wherever she is based.
- And, the rest of her family members can purchase subsidised foodgrains from their ration dealer back home.

How did the system evolve?

- The PDS system had some inefficiencies leading to leakages in the system.
- To plug the leakages and make the system better, the government started the reform process.
- For this purpose, it used a technological solution involving the use of Aadhaar to identify beneficiaries.
- Under the scheme, the seeding of ration cards with Aadhaar is being done.
- Simultaneously, PoS machines are being installed at all FPSs across the country.
- Once 100% of Aadhaar seeding and 100% installation of PoS devices is achieved, the national portability of ration cards will become a reality.
- It was initially proposed to nationally rollout the 'One Nation, One Ration Card' scheme by June 1, 2020.

What is the experience so far?

- The facility of inter-state ration card portability is available in 20 states as of now.
- But the number of transactions done through using this facility has been low so far.
- However, the number of transactions in intra-state ration card portability is quite high.

Source: Indian Express

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