PM POSHAN Scheme

Why in news?

The existing Mid-Day Meal scheme which provides hot meals to students will be renamed as the **National Scheme for PM Poshan Shakti Nirman.**

What are the key features of the scheme?

- It is a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme that aims to enhance the nutrition levels of schoolchildren
- Eligibility - All school going students of classes I to VIII studying in government and government-aided schools are eligible to avail the benefits.
- Duration - For a period of five years (2021-22 to 2025-26)
- The total budget of the scheme will amount to Rs. 1, 30,794.90 crore.
- The scheme will be extended to pre-primary students or Bal Vatikas of Government and Government-aided primary schools.
- The concept of **TithiBhojan** (community participation programme in which people provide special food to children on special occasions) will be encouraged extensively.
- Government is also promoting the development of **Nutrition Gardens** in schools.
- Social Audit of the scheme is made mandatory in all the districts.
- Special provision is made for providing supplementary nutrition to children in aspirational districts and districts with high prevalence of Anemia.
- Cooking competitions will be encouraged at all levels right from village level to national level to promote ethnic cuisine.
- Involvement of Farmers Producer Organizations (FPO) and Women Self Help Groups in implementation of the scheme will be encouraged.
- While Centre bears the entire cost of food grains, their transportation, management, monitoring and evaluation, components such as cooking costs, payments to cooks and workers are split in a 60:40 ratio with states.

What is the need for this scheme?

- The findings in Phase I of the NFHS-5 for 22 States and Union Territories

in December 2020 were shocking

1. Childhood stunting rose in 13 States
2. High prevalence of anaemia among children and women
3. Wasting was a serious concern in 12 States

- The worsening case of malnutrition threatens to deprive millions of children of a fully productive adult life.
- The **National Education Policy (NEP)** has also recommended that pre-school education should be formalised and this scheme is a step towards that.

Can this scheme bring the desired outcome?

- The West Bengal government accused the Centre of just changing the name of the mid-day meal scheme.
- While the NEP proposes breakfast in schools, the government has not taken any decision on that yet.
- The renewed plan should introduce a greater diversity of diets that compensates for micronutrient and protein deficiency.
- The Government must fiscally strengthen the **Saksham Anganwadi-Mission POSHAN 2.0** which amalgamates POSHAN Abhiyan and schemes covering anganwadis, creches and adolescent girls.

Mission Poshan 2.0 (Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0) has been announced in budget 2021-2022 as an integrated nutrition support programme to strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcomes.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

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