Sarthak-PDS Scheme

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance| Schemes*

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the Sarthak-PDS, with an outlay of Rs 25,530 crores.

- **Sarthak-PDS** – Scheme for Assistance in Ration Transport and Handling-Income with Automation in PDS.
- **Integration –** It is an *umbrella scheme* integrating two existing programmes
  - Assistance for intra-state movement of food grains and Fair Price Shop dealer margins under *the National Food Security Act (NFSA).*
  - The *SMART-PDS* initiative focused on technology-driven reforms.
- **Implementation period** – It will be implemented for five years from *April 2026 to March 2031* under the 16th Finance Commission cycle.
- **Objectives –** To support state governments' distribution of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY).

Features

- **Modernising PDS** – To strengthen and modernise the Public Distribution System (PDS) for the effective implementation of the PMGKAY.
- **Remuneration enhancement** – To enhance the remuneration of fair price shop dealers, which had remained unchanged for several years.
- **Transport & Handling Support** – State agencies struggled with the costs of moving grains from FCI warehouses to districts and Fair Price Shops.
- The Central government will now provide financial support to cover these costs.
- **Unified Database** – The scheme also proposes unified databases and state-level command and control centres for efficient operations.
- **Technological Reforms –** It focuses on
  - Digital transformation of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS),
  - Ration card digitisation,
  - Aadhaar seeding,
  - E-pos-enabled fair price shops, and
  - Platforms including Mera Ration and Anna Sahayata.
- **Technologies used** – It will use technologies such as
  - Artificial intelligence (AI),
  - Machine learning (ML),

    - Natural language processing (NLP), and
    - Blockchain for better supply-chain management, monitoring, and grievance redressal.
- **Significance –** The initiative is expected to improve transparency, reduce leakages, ensure efficient food grain distribution, and strengthen food security for beneficiaries across India.

Reference

Business Standard| Sarthak-PDS Scheme

