

Mid Day Meal Scheme

[UPSC Notes]

What is a Mid Day Meal Programme?

The Mid Day Meal scheme is one of its kind and the biggest feeding program launched by the government of India. Under this scheme, all the students enrolled between the class 1st to 8th in government or government-aided schools and Madrasas are eligible to enjoy a one-time meal for at least 200 days a year.

- The main purpose of launching such a scheme was to increase the number of admissions to the school.
- States like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have actively participated in this scheme and have implemented small initiatives like the introduction of the Kitchen Gardens, where the vegetables and fruits to be served to children are cultivated within the premises of the school.

Mid Day Meal Scheme in India

The history of the Mid Day Meal scheme in India dates back to 1925 by the Madras Municipal Corporation to fulfil the hunger demands of the disadvantaged children in the corporation.

- Gradually, by the late 1970s, the scheme was enacted in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Pondicherry. Slowly it started spreading to many other states too.
- Considering the benefits and outcomes, the Government of India decided to implement this scheme nationwide. With this, the scheme was launched as the National Program for Nutritional Support to Primary Students, in the schools, in 1995. Later it was renamed the National Programme of Mid Day Meal.
- In 2001 the Supreme Court of India passed an order for all the states to provide a properly cooked meal to all the students in school under Mid Day Meal Scheme

Objectives of Mid Day Meal Scheme

Following are some important objectives of Mid Day Meal scheme-

- To increase the number of admissions in the schools and their retention, at least for primary education.
- To increase the nutrition level in the economically backward students by providing them with a nutritional meal.
- To abolish the existing nutritional gap between girls and boys.

- To reduce the system of casteism among the students and bring them on one common platform for education.
- To eliminate classroom hunger.

Features of Mid Day Meal Scheme

- The Mid Day Meal program is the largest program in India that came to achieve the goal of a literate India.
- The Mid Day Meal Scheme was launched by the Ministry of Education, formerly known as the Ministry of Human Resources and Development.
- It is a centrally launched scheme where the budget is divided between the center and state, and the center holds 60% of the total budget.
- Tamil Nadu became the first state to implement the Mid Day Meal scheme in its schools.
- In 2001, the Mid Day Meal scheme was reformed as a cooked Mid Day Meal scheme where the children were eligible to get a fully prepared meal for 200 days in a year. The nutritional chart for this meal included an energy intake of 200 calories and a protein intake of about 8 grams.
- Primarily this scheme was launched for the Government and government-aided schools. Gradually, this concept was adopted for the children studying in the education guarantee system and alternative and innovative education.
- In 2004 the Mid Day Meal Scheme was revised for the following provisions -
 - The central government provides the cooking cost.
 - Transportation subsidy was imposed on states, where it was 100 rs. For the special states and 75 rs. For the other states.
 - Monitoring, evaluation, and management of schemes started by the government.
 - Providing the Mid Day Meal to the students during the summer vacations in the drought-prone areas of the country.
- This scheme was again revised in 2006, with certain provisions-
 - The cooking costs were upgraded to rs .1.80 in the northeast regional schools and 1.50 in all other regional schools.
 - The calorie chart was revised, where the energy intake was increased to 400 calories, and the protein intake was increased to 12 grams.
- In 2007, another category of students was added to the scheme. The students coming from the educationally backward classes became part of the scheme.
- In 2009, the madrasas were included in the list of Mid Day Meal schemes.
- A very important and interesting part here is that the students are provided with the additional funds and the meals, under the National Rural Health Mission.

PM-POSHAN (Revamped Mid Day Meal Scheme)

The Mid Day Meal Scheme has been renamed many times, and currently, it is called the PM Poshan Shakti Mission.

- Under the PM Poshan Shakti mission, the team successfully delivers meals to about 11 lakh Government schools.

- In terms of finances, there is no major change as compared to the formerly existing Mid-Day Meal scheme.
- The PM Poshan Shakti Nirman scheme will be implemented after every 5 years, ie, 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- The finance distribution among the state and Centre remains the same as the Mid Day Meal scheme, which is in the ratio of 60:40 in the case of general States and 90:10 in the case of special States

Implementation of Mid Day Meal Scheme

The implementation of Mid Day Meal took place in three models-

1. The decentralized model is where meals are prepared on-site by the self-help groups and the local cooks.
2. Centralized model in which the preparation of meals is done by external organizations and delivered the food to the schools.
3. The international assistant under which the charity organizations run internationally at the Government schools.

Mid Day Meal Rules 2015

The Mid Day Meal rules were published under the national food security act 2013 on 30 September, 2015. The Mid Day Meal rules of 2015 are-

1. Under the Mid Day Meal rules the schools are eligible to utilize other funds for Mid Day Meal in case the fund allotted for this scheme gets exhausted.
2. If the school and external organizations fail to provide food to the children, then they are eligible for the food allowances.
3. The food served to the children in schools needs to be checked by the accredited labs monthly, which can be a random check.
4. Suppose the students in a school don't get food for three consecutive days or 5 days a month. In that case, it becomes the responsibility of the state government to fix the issue immediately through a person or any agency.

Features of MDM

- All the children who come in the bandwidth of age 1 to 8 years, are eligible and entitled to get a healthy lunch packet daily excluding the holidays.
- The schools need to purchase the AGMARK grade commodities to prepare meals.
- The Mid Day Meals are to be served to the students on the school ground only.
- Every school needs to have a mandatory cooking facility to prepare meals.
- The principal of the government school is entitled to use the other funds for a Mid Day Meal in case it gets exhausted. However, once they are refunded with the MDM budget, they need to return it to the government.
- The state food and drug administration are entitled to collect the samples of the food provided to the children randomly to check the quality of the meal.

- In case the food cannot be delivered to the schools due to unavoidable circumstances the food allowances will be provided to the children which is the number of food grains spent on one child's entitlement.

Issues and Malpractices related to Mid Day Meal Scheme

- **Corruption:** Corruption has been at the roots of the government system and Mid Day Meals are also a part of it. There have been several cases where students were served plain chapati with salt and milk mixed with water.
- **Caste-Based Discrimination:** the concept was initiated to bring the ones among all the students still, they are cases of caste-based discrimination where children are made to sit separately according to their castes.
- **Menace of Malnutrition:** the scheme was launched to curb the problem of malnutrition among children below the age of 10, but according to the national family health survey, many states have been seen to record the rivers course and decreasing level of child nutrition.
- **Global Hunger Index:** India has fallen back to the 101st position in the Global hunger index from 94 in 2020.
- **Global Nutrition Report:** according to the Global nutrition report, there are no significant changes in the cases of anaemia and childhood wasting in India.