GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION AND LITERACY

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1610
TO BE ANSWERED ON 16.03.2022

Access to education during lockdown

1610. SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE:

Will the Minister of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that a study of students between Grades I and VIII from underprivileged backgrounds has highlighted that only 8 per cent were attending online classes in rural areas and as many as 37 per cent had not studied at all for the entirety of the pandemic;
(b) the steps taken by Government to ensure access to proper tools required for online learning;
(c) whether 20 per cent students in urban areas and 14 per cent in rural areas said they had received no compensation in place of Mid-Day Meal at all; and
(d) the steps taken to provide Mid-Day Meals at home?

ANSWER
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(SMT. ANNPURNA DEVI)

(a) & (b): Education is in the concurrent list of the Constitution and majority of the schools are under the domain of respective State and UT Governments. However, in order to ensure that every student of the country gets continued access to education, a multi-pronged approach has been adopted. Regarding school education, to facilitate the online learning by all students a comprehensive initiative called PM eVIDYA has been initiated as part of AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan on 17th May, 2020, which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education. The initiative includes:

- DIKSHA the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in states/UTs: and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all grades (one nation, one digital platform)
- One earmarked SwayamPrabha TV channel per class from 1 to 12 (one class, one channel)

- Extensive use of Radio, Community radio and CBSE Podcast- Shiksha Vani
- Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language on NIOS website/ YouTube

Further, an Alternate Academic Calendar has been prepared for providing learning solutions for grade 1 to 12 and 'Students' Learning Enhancement Guidelines' prepared by NCERT suggest models for the following three types of scenarios to ensure that no child is deprived of reach of education:

a) Learning Enhancement during COVID-19 for students without digital devices;
b) Learning Enhancement during COVID-19 for students with limited accessibility to digital devices &
c) Learning Enhancement during COVID-19 for students with digital devices.

Also, PRAGYATA guidelines issued to States/UTs to facilitate continued education through various modes. The guidelines inter-alia includes situations where internet connectivity is not available or available with very less bandwidth where resources are shared through various platforms like television, radio etc that do not depend on internet.

Where the digital facility (mobile device/ DTH television) is not available, Ministry of Education has taken many initiatives like Community Radio Stations and a podcast called Shiksha Vani of CBSE, Textbooks, worksheet supplied to residence of learners, Handbook on 21st Century Skills and community/mohalla classes are organized. Innovation Funds of the Department are used to set up mobile school, virtual studios, virtual class rooms in schools, Continuous Learning Plan (CLP) for States/UTs has been initiated in all States/UTs, pre-loaded tablets in various states and UTs are effectively used in remote/rural areas where online classes are difficult.

Under the BharatNetprogramme, the CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd (CSC-SPV) of MeitY has been assigned the task of providing Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connectivity to the Government Institutions, including schools.

(c) & (d): Due to the COVID pandemic, since schools were closed, all enrolled children are eligible for Food Security Allowance comprising of food grains and cooking cost. Some States/UTs have provided food grains alongwith payment of cooking cost into the beneficiary's bank accounts/through cash while other States/UTs provided food grains and dry ration like pulses etc equivalent to cooking cost since 2020-21. About 11.80 crore children are benefited under the scheme studying in 11.20 lakh school during this period.

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