

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION & LITERACY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-3065
ANSWERED ON-20.08.2025

Quality of food under PM-POSHAN scheme

3065 Shri Raghav Chadha:

Will the Minister of *Education* be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of the cases of food poisoning due to unhygienic and poor quality of mid-day meals provided in Government schools under PM-POSHAN scheme;
- (b) if so, details of the number of such cases during last five years, State-wise and year-wise, and the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether it is a fact that significant number of students are opting out of mid-day meal scheme due to health concerns and if so, the details thereof, State-wise and year-wise; and
- (d) what action is being taken by Government to improve the quality of food provided in mid-day meals?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

(SHRI JAYANT CHAUDHARY)

(a) to (d): Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme is one of the foremost rights based Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented in partnership with the States and Union Territories (UTs) for providing one hot cooked and nutritious meal to all children studying in Bal Vatika (just before class-I) and classes I to VIII of Government and Government-aided schools. The Scheme covers about 11 crore children in more than 10.35 lakh schools in all the States/ UTs. The overall responsibility for providing hot cooked and nutritious meal to the eligible children lies with the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. For FY 2025-26, budget allocation for the PM Poshan Scheme is Rs. 12,500 crore by Government of India and the State/ UT share as per the sharing pattern is around Rs. 8,500 crore including additional funds for Honorarium to Cook-cum-Helpers and Supplementary Nutrition items. The foodgrain allocation by Government of India is 24.15 lakh MTs which costs around Rs. 9000 crore. Thus overall allocation for the PM Poshan Scheme for FY 2025-26 is more than Rs. 30,000 crore including more than Rs. 21,500 crore made by Government of India.

The Government of India has issued detailed guidelines on quality, safety and hygiene to ensure serving of good quality nutritious meal under the Scheme. All the States/ UTs were advised to adhere to these Guidelines. These guidelines are available on official website <https://pmposhan.education.gov.in>. These guidelines, inter-alia, provides for

instructions to schools to procure Agmark quality and branded items for preparation of meals, training to Cook-cum-Helpers, tasting of meals by members of School Management Committee including at least one teacher before serving the hot meal to children. Further, the Mid-Day Meal Rules, 2015 provide for mandatory testing of food samples by Government Food Research Laboratory or any laboratory accredited or recognized by law to ensure that the meals meet nutritional standards and quality. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) is given responsibility for making available food grains of best available quality, meeting the parameters of Fair Average Quality (FAQ). The States/UTs are required to conduct Social Audit in all districts in at least 20 schools or 2% of the schools, whichever is higher for each district. The responsibility for taking action and ensuring compliance on the Social Audit findings rests with the State/ UT Nodal Department implementing the PM POSHAN Scheme. The Guidelines, inter-alia, provides for training of Cook-cum-Helpers on nutrition, cooking processes, health and hygiene, preparation of raw grains and vegetables, recipes, serving skills etc. States/ UTs provide training to CCHs in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism, Government of India through their Institutes of Hotel Management and Food Craft Institutes, FSSAI, State Agricultural Universities etc. States/ UTs are directed to conduct Cooking Competitions among Cook cum Helpers to encourage them to cook varied and nutritious meals. Many States/ UTs conduct the Cooking Competitions and also give cash prizes to the winners. The States and Union Territory Administrations are encouraged to decide menu suitable to the local conditions within the prescribed nutrition and food norms and to procure locally grown food items like millets, vegetables, condiments etc.

As per the extant guidelines of the PM Poshan Scheme States/ UTs have conducted social audits in 32,664 schools across the country. Further, the States/ UTs through their designated officials have conducted inspections in 9.78 lakh schools. The State/ UTs have conducted 25,389 testing of meals across the country. To encourage community participation in the scheme, Tithi Bhojan is extensively promoted, wherein, community members are encouraged to provide full meal/ additional food items to school children on special occasions such as festivals, anniversaries, birthdays, marriages, and days of National importance etc. Overall, 6.43 crore students studying in 5.77 lakh schools were benefitted under Tithi Bhojan across the country. To give first hand experience with nature, gardening and to inculcate the habit of eat right among the students School Nutrition Gardens (SNGs) have been set up and are funded under the Scheme. As on 31st March, 2025 more than 6.28 lakh schools have set up SNGs under the Scheme. The scheme provides elaborate monitoring mechanism i.e. Empowered Committee under the Chairpersonship of Hon'ble Union Education Minister, Programme Approval Board (PAB) under the Chairpersonship of Secretary (DoSE&L), State Steering-cum-Monitoring Committee under the Chairpersonship of Chief Secretary, District level Steering-cum- Monitoring Committee under the Chairpersonship of District Collector. The PM Poshan Guidelines provides a District Level Committee under the Chairmanship of senior most Member of Parliament (MP) of the district to monitor the scheme on quarterly basis.

There have been no reports of students opting out of PM Poshan Scheme due to any reasons whatsoever and meals are provided to all the eligible students on all school days. However, during the last 5 years a total of nine (09) incidents of food poisoning took place including 3 in Bihar (2024), 2 in Delhi (2023), 2 in Odisha (2022, 2024), 1 in Uttar Pradesh (2021) and 1 in West Bengal (2023).
