

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 343
TO BE ANSWERED ON 24TH MARCH, 2026

TEMPORARY DISCONTINUATION OF RICE FORTIFICATION

343 **DR. SIKANDER KUMAR:**

Will the Minister of *Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution* be pleased to state:

- (a): whether the specific findings of a recent study by IIT Kharagpur regarding micronutrient degradation and shelf-life, necessitated the temporary discontinuation of rice fortification under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) announced recently;
- (b): whether Government has formulated a transitional roadmap for States/UTs to switch back to non-fortified rice and the criteria for more robust and effective nutrient delivery mechanism currently under development; and
- (c): the measures taken to address safety concerns raised by experts regarding iron-fortified rice for patients with Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Anaemia during this recalibration period?

A N S W E R
MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AND MINISTRY
OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY
(SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI)

(a) to (c): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (c) OF STARRED QUESTION NO. 343 DUE FOR ANSWER ON 24.03.2026 IN THE RAJYA SABHA.

(a): The temporary discontinuation of rice fortification under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) and Other Welfare Schemes was necessitated by a number of the factors, including Stability and Shelf-life of fortified rice under actual storage conditions as established by a study by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur. A third-party audit of Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK) manufacturing units by National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM), Kundli, also revealed widespread non-compliance with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s General Hygienic and Sanitary Practices by the Food Business Operators. Also, a formative research study by Indian Council of Medical Research - National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN) identified that many beneficiaries mistake floating FRKs for contaminants, chaff or debris. This leads to the physical removal and discarding of the fortified kernels during pre-cooking, effectively negating the program's nutritional objectives.

(b): Yes.

(c): The Government is following packaging and labelling instructions issued by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, vide Gazette Notification dated 02.08.2018 and its amendment dated 27.08.2021, for iron-fortified food, which includes an advisory for individuals with thalassemia and sickle cell anaemia.
