

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

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.718
TO BE ANSWERED ON 8TH DECEMBER, 2023

FREE FOOD TO 80 CRORE CITIZENS

718. SHRI KUMAR KETKAR:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government has announced free food to eighty crores citizens for the next five years;
- (b) if so, the reasons for this scheme and whether those eighty crores citizens come under Below Poverty Line; and
- (c) the budgetary provision earmarked and allocated for this scheme?

A N S W E R
MINISTER OF STATE FOR MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONSUMER
AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SADHVI NIRANJAN JYOTI)

(a)& (b): The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) was launched with the specific purpose of ameliorating the hardships faced by the poor and needy due to economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak in the country. In view of COVID crisis, the allocation of free foodgrains, under PMGKAY was in addition to regular allocation done. A total quantity of approx. 1118 LMT foodgrains had been allocated under PMGKAY (Phase I-VII) for the period of 28 months with a total planned financial outlay was about Rs. 3.91 lakh crore.

The Central Government, in order to remove the financial burden of the poor beneficiaries and to ensure nationwide uniformity and effective implementation of the programme for support of the poor, the Central Government had decided to provide food grains free of cost to Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households and Priority Households (PHH) beneficiaries, beginning from 1st January 2023 under the PMGKAY.

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Keeping in view welfare of the beneficiaries of PMGKAY in terms of accessibility, affordability and availability of food grains for the poor and to maintain uniformity across the States, the Government has decided to continue to provide free food grains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries (i.e. Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households and Priority Households (PHH) beneficiaries) under the PMGKAY for a period of five years with effect from 1st January, 2024, with an estimated financial outlay of Rs. 11.80 lakh crore totally to be borne by Central Government.

The provision of free food grains under PMGKAY for five years with effect from 1st January 2024 reflects the long-term commitment and vision of the Government for addressing National food and nutrition security. Provision of free food grains shall mitigate any financial hardship of the affected strata of society in a sustainable manner and ensure long term pricing strategy with zero cost to the beneficiaries which is vital for effective penetration of the Public Distribution System.

There is no Above Poverty Line (APL) or Below Poverty Line (BPL) category under the PMGKAY.

(c): The estimated cost of PMGKAY is Rs. 11.80 lakh crore over a 5-year period. An amount of Rs.1,97,000 crore was allocated at the Budget Estimates (BE) stage by the Ministry of Finance for distribution of food grains under PMGKAY for the financial year 2023-24. Funds for the scheme, in subsequent years are envisaged to be allocated at an appropriate stage, by the Ministry of Finance.
