

Need to reconsider the advisory of reducing cooking oil in Mid-Day Meals under the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)

MS. DOLA SEN (West Bengal): Thank you, Chairman, Sir, for giving me opportunity to speak on my Zero Hour submission on need to urgently reconsider our advisory to reduce cooking oil in Mid-Day Meal Scheme. The Union Government has issued an advisory recommending a 10 per cent reduction in cooking oil uses in Mid-Day Meal Scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme, aiming to combat childhood obesity. While addressing obesity is important, Sir, this directive may not consider the diverse nutritional needs of children across the country. Many students relying on Mid-Day Meal come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds where malnutrition, rather than obesity, is prevalent.

(MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *in the Chair*)

Healthy fats from cooking oils are essential for growth and cognitive development. A blanket reduction could inadvertently deprive these children of necessary nutrients. Moreover, concerns have been raised about the potential impact on meal quality. Reducing oil content might lead to the use of lower quality ingredients or dilution methods using water, compromising both taste and nutritional value. Stakeholders have criticized the advisory as unscientific, calling for a comprehensive unscientific nutritional assessment before implementing such measures. Additionally, the advisory lacks empirical data supporting the correlation between current oil uses in mid-day meal and rising obesity rates among school children. Without such evidence, policy changes may be misguided and potentially harmful. Given these concerns, it is imperative that the Government reevaluates the advisory. A thorough evidence-based study should be conducted to assess the nutritional implications of reducing cooking oil in Mid-Day Meals. Policies should be tailored to address regional health changes, ensuring that interventions are aligned to the realities on the ground and not averse to them. सर, हम सोचते हैं per student/per child funding को बढ़ाना चाहिए। I urge upon the Union Government that it may be taken up on a serious note and the advisory may be revoked, so that the children from downtrodden families, who are large in numbers and comprise majority of our population, may get their rights as per law. Thank you, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The following hon. Members associated themselves with the matter raised by hon. Member, Ms. Dola Sen: Shrimati Jebi Mather Hisham (Kerala), Shri A. A. Rahim (Kerala), Shri R. Girirajan (Tamil Nadu), Shri Niranjana Bishi (Odisha), Dr. Fauzia Khan (Maharashtra), Dr. Sasmit Patra (Odisha), Shri

Saket Gokhale (West Bengal), Shri Mohammed Nadimul Haque (West Bengal), Shrimati Mausam B Noor (West Bengal), Shrimati Phulo Devi Netam (Chhattisgarh), Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla (Tamil Nadu), Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), Shri Ramji (Uttar Pradesh), Shri Prakash Chik Baraik (West Bengal), Shrimati Sagarika Ghose (West Bengal), Shri Haris Beeran (Kerala), Shri P. Wilson (Tamil Nadu), Shri Jose K. Mani (Kerala) and Shri M. Shanmugam (Tamil Nadu).

Now, Shri M. Shanmugam, 'Need to review the facial recognition system for issuing take home ration to the beneficiaries under Integrated Child Development Services Scheme through Anganwadi workers'.

Need to review the facial recognition system for issuing Take Home Ration (THR) to the beneficiaries under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme through Anganwadi workers

SHRI M. SHANMUGAM (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I am raising a very important matter, namely, the problems being faced by beneficiaries under the ICDS Programme. Representations have been received from various stakeholders against the introduction of two-Factor Authentication System for take home ration distribution through Anganwadi workers for beneficiaries under the ICDS.

Under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Mission POSHAN, supplementary nutrition is provided to children, pregnant women, lactating mothers to address the challenge of malnutrition. Even the pregnant mothers are compelled to come to Anganwadi Centres to do facial recognition for getting the ration. Because of this cumbersome procedure and not getting OTP, as the mobile which is registered might be with the male member and not readily accessible to beneficiary, many people are not able to avail the benefit. This system has also put strain on the Anganwadi workers, as they have to carry kits to the centres and sometimes, these are not received. Besides, due to tower problem, phones do not work. Even all the Anganwadi workers are not having smart phones. This system may reduce the strength of beneficiaries in which case funds to the States will also reduce, which is not fair.

Sir, they are getting only meager honorarium which is less than the minimum wages declared by various State Governments. The enormous amount of work which they have to perform is nothing but exploitation of workers. Hence, their salary should be increased and other welfare benefits like PF, ESI, pension, etc. should be extended to them. At many places, Anganwadi workers are going on strike.