



**DR J M PHATAK**  
Secretary, School  
Education

**On the state government's stand on enforcing midday meals in schools**

**'Kids from aided schools are used to eating higher quality food'**

that children from aided schools, who are used to eating higher quality food, do not want to have midday meals.

**'Students are free to refuse the food'**

**Has the department thought of any option to khichdi?**

We made a reference to the Supreme Court through the court commissioner that baked biscuits could be an alternative. There has been no response yet.

**Are private aided schools in Mumbai ready to implement this?**

This has been implemented well in municipal schools. Almost 55 to 60 per cent of primary school children are in municipal schools. I've had a meeting with officials from private aided schools.

They say they don't have a proper place to cook. It is upto them. If schools don't want to implement it, a resolution has to be passed by the school PTA and we should be informed.

**It is alleged that the quality of food in municipal schools is poor.** In Mumbai, the food is centrally cooked, so it becomes a little thick by the time it is served. But there is room for improvement. Till now the government was paying 60 paise per child per day as cooking charges. But soon there will be an additional one rupee for every child. Once that happens, the quality will improve.

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**  
bombaytimes@timesgroup.com

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# School meals a must by January: SC

**New Delhi:** In an order that could attract more children to schools, the supreme court has fixed January 2005 as the deadline for all states to provide cooked meals to students upto class V as the Centre decided to provide an additional Re 1 per child to meet cooking costs.

"Every child eligible for cooked meal under midday meal scheme in all states and union territories, shall be provided with the said meal immediately and, in any case, not later than the month of January 2005," a bench of justice Y K Sabharwal and justice S H Kapadia ordered recently.

The court dealing with a PIL filed by People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCI) made it clear that "it would not be open to delay in the implementation of the scheme beyond January 2005 for reasons like the necessary assistance has not been released by the Central government".



**The SC says the scheme should be implemented forthwith and the cooking costs can be claimed from the Centre**

scheme in many states including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand on the ground of increasing cooking cost.

It said the scheme should be implemented "forthwith" and cooking costs could be claimed from the Centre later. The bench asked the chief secretaries of the 16 states being taken to implement this order.

The court also asked them to file an additional affidavit by the second week of January 2005 detailing the full implementation of the direction to supply cooked meal to all eligible children.

The court said the responsibility of monitoring implementation of the scheme fell on the Central government as it was providing assistance. It directed the Centre "to file, within four weeks, an affidavit stating how it proposes to manage, monitor or evaluate the midday meal scheme so that benefit under the scheme reaches those for whom it is meant".

The Times of India, Mumbai

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