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Five years to cook food, as two lakh students wait

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, March 16. — Over two lakh children in the city have been deprived of primary education due to administrative callousness of the School Education department, revealed a report by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

At the Assembly last week, the PAC reported that though the scheme of providing cooked food to primary schools was introduced in 1995, it had taken five

years for the department to launch it in the city.

The reason for the delay, cited by department officials before the committee was strange. The School Education department said that for five years it had been unable to appoint a nodal officer, because the city does not have a district magistrate. When finally, the director of school education was chosen for the post, the delay had deprived 2.54 lakh students.

The PAC in its report has severely

criticised the School Education department for its failure to supply cooked

- **Scheme to provide cooked food in primary schools introduced in 1995, yet to take off**
- **Nodal officer's appointment stalled for the past five years**
- **2.54 lakh students deprived of education**

food to the students of the primary

schools and recommended that the tasks of handling, procurement and distribution of foodgrain be handed over to the food department.

The PAC in its report stated that steps should be taken immediately to supply cooked food to the students of the primary schools. The committee feels that the help of NGOs and registered clubs should be taken to do the job. It may be recalled that the Supreme Court had instructed that all primary schoolchildren will have to be given cooked food.

The school education department had confessed before PAC members that cooked food could not be distributed due to fund constraints and lack of infrastructure in most of the primary schools.

The officials of the department stated that to supply cooked food for 300 days to all the primary schools the state government would require Rs 600 crore. Moreover, most of the primary schools do not have the necessary infrastructure required to supply cooked food among the students.