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Date: 30-03-2023

To,

The Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Government of Karnataka,
Bengaluru,

Subject: Seeking your urgent intervention in restoring supply of milk to schools and *anganwadis* under the *Ksheera Bhagya* Scheme.

Respected Sir,

We invite your urgent attention to the disruption in supply of milk (powder) to government, government-aided schools and *anganwadis* in several districts of Karnataka under the *Ksheera Bhagya* Scheme since January 2023. According to news reports, since January the supply of milk powder from KMF has been discontinued in at least 11 districts in the state, of which some of the districts like Gadag, Bidar, Ballari and Vijayanagara are known to have high incidence of hunger and malnutrition among children who attend government-run and government-aided schools.¹

Milk is also one of the best sources of calcium which helps development of strong bones and teeth and in addition also has good quality proteins and growth factors which helps improve heights and reduces the risk of stunting (less height for age). A recent report from National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad states that milk has good digestibility and net protein utilization which means better quality of protein.

Milk is also rich in several nutrients like water soluble vitamins B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B12, folate, fat soluble vitamins, zinc, magnesium, phosphorus etc. 18 gm of whole milk powder which is reconstituted to make 150 ml milk has 4.68 gm protein. Studies show that children receiving milk powder show significant increase in heights and weights.

The importance of the *Ksheera Bhagya* scheme lies in not just the nutritional value of a glass of milk that is provided under its aegis, but also the fact that often children come hungry to school and this glass of milk is the only food item they consume during the 15-16 hours duration between previous night's meal and the mid-day meal at the school (~12 pm afternoon). It is disconcerting, that while multi-crore projects like Metro Rail and Bengaluru-Mysuru Express Highway are being inaugurated, the government has been unable to restore supply of milk powder to the schools in these districts for the last three months.

It has been reported that the issue of disruption of supply of milk powder to government-run, government-aided schools and *anganwadis* under the *Ksheera Bhagya* scheme may have arisen due to the decline in procurement by the KMF from the dairy farmers in the state on

¹ *Deccan Herald*, 'No milk in schools since Jan, attendance dips in K'taka,' March 26, 2023.

account of the following reasons:-

- The government's decision to disallow necessary increase in the retail prices of milk.
- The non-payment of Rs 5/litre incentive to the milk-sellers by the government since November 2022.²

Hence, we request you to undertake following urgent steps to ensure continued supply of milk to government-run and government-aided schools under the Ksheera Bhagya scheme:-

1. The incentive of Rs 5/litre of milk procured pending since November 2022 should be immediately released.
2. The necessary increase in retail prices of milk should be carried out to ensure procurement by KMF in sufficient quantities.
3. All pending dues of KMF with the Education Department and the Women and Child Development Department should be cleared immediately.
4. KMF should be directed to prioritize supply of existing stocks of milk powder towards supply under the Ksheera Bhagya scheme over other forms of utilization.
5. In future, sufficient buffer stocks should be earmarked by KMF to manage such shortages in procurement and an advance should be paid by the Education Department and the Women and Child Development Department to KMF for maintenance of such buffer stocks.

At no cost should there be disruption in supply of the Ksheera Bhagya scheme to children in *anganwadis*, government and government aided schools in Karnataka, including *madrassas* and aided schools run by other minority institutions.

Yours Sincerely,

Ahara Namma Hakku-Karnataka

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² *The Hindu*, 'Incentive for milk producers pending since November 2022,' March 16, 2023.