

Govt okays sale of pulses to states at discounted rates

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NEW DELHI: The Centre on Thursday approved a proposal to sell pulses at discounted rates to state governments, under the public distribution system and the mid-day meal scheme for school children. The government is expecting to clear the 3.5 million tonnes of stock procured during the past one year and improve nutritional indicators for poor households with this first-of-its-kind move.

Central agencies will sell tur, chana, moong, masoor and urad

at a discount of ₹15 per kg over prevailing wholesale prices.

The sale will continue for the next one year and will be a one-time measure to clear the stock for about ₹5,237 crore, the cabinet said. The government's decision on pulses follows consecutive years of record production of pulses. In 2017-18, pulse output grew to a record 24.5 million tonnes, and as farm gate prices fell sharply the Centre stepped in to procure pulses at minimum support prices from farmers.

"This is a pro-poor decision. We intend to give nutritional

strength to the poor people. Pulses are generally out of reach of the poor because of high prices. Since pulses have high protein content in them, they will help in improving the health status of the poor," said Ravi Shankar Prasad, minister of law and justice and electronics and information technology.

Mint had reported last month that the government is weighing the proposal to offer pulses under welfare schemes to clear stocks.

In 2017-18, central agencies had procured over 4.5 million tonnes of pulses, the highest ever.