



PM opposes packaged food for schoolkids

15 Mar 2008, 0046 hrs IST, Nitin Sethi, TNN

NEW DELHI: In a clear sign that the UPA government has not yet been able to reconcile its policy on the revamp of the Rs 50,000-crore Integrated Child Development Scheme, the Prime Minister on Friday reiterated his opposition to the women and child development ministry's intent to provide prepackaged food to children through contractors under the scheme in a meet with the Supreme Court-appointed food commissioners.

The meeting, sources said, came against the backdrop of a deadlock within different wings of the government on the future of the scheme that provides supplementary nutrition and health services to more than 7 crore children across the country through a vast network of anganwadis.

The PMO and the Planning Commission have recommended the continuation of decentralized hot cooked meals and removing the influence of contractors and manufacturers in what is bound to become a Rs 4,500-crore annual food supply business once the Supreme Court order of universalizing the scheme is achieved.

But the nodal ministry, headed by Renuka Chowdhary, has been pushing hard for inclusion of packaged food that would imply the role of contractors and large manufacturers and provide them an assured market for their products across the country.
