

Modi releases PM CARES benefits for 'COVID orphans'

A total of 4,439 children identified; no poor person will be left out, says PM

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"Maa Bharati is with all of you," Prime Minister Narendra Modi told children orphaned by COVID-19 who received their benefits under the PM CARES scheme on Monday.

"Today, the poorest of the poor is confident that they will receive benefits from government schemes. No poor person should be left out of government schemes, that is our utmost priority," Mr. Modi told the beneficiaries across various districts who joined the programme through teleconference.

A total of 4,439 children have been approved for the scheme. Children who lost both their parents or a primary caregiver between March 11, 2020 and February 28, 2022 are eligible for the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi attends the release of benefits under the PM Cares for Children scheme through a video conference in New Delhi. ■PTI

scheme. The PM also wrote an emotional personal letter to the beneficiaries. "A century ago, when the entire world was in the grip of a terrible pandemic like today, my mother lost her mother, i.e. my maternal grandmother. My mother was so young that today she doesn't remember her mother's face.

She spent an entire life in the absence of her mother, without her affection. Therefore, today, I can very well understand the anguish in your mind, the conflict in your heart," he wrote.

The scheme offers a lumpsum amount of ₹10 lakh when children turn 23 years old as well as a monthly sti-

pend from the age of 18 to 23.

School-going children will receive free education, textbooks and uniforms in the nearest government schools.

Those in private schools may avail themselves of fee reimbursement. Students can also take loans for professional courses and higher education.