

# THE SPECTRE OF STARVING INDIA

**BY COLIN GONSALVES**

## **PUCL –VS- UOI**

I was in Jaipur for a meeting organised by Kavita Shrivastav of the PUCL unconnected with starvation deaths, where I met Jean Dreze, a professor of economics at Delhi. He suggested that I go with him to a village nearby to see the extent of hunger in the countryside. An hour's drive from Jaipur and we were in another world that of the dispossessed. People had no food at all and fluoride in the well-water had prematurely aged the young people.

Miles away were the godowns of the Food Corporation of India – full of grain, some of it rotting and a feast for rats.

This is the spectre of starving India.

In December 2000, the Union Minister for Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution wrote to all chief ministers admitting that five crore people are victims of starvation. A few days later, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan complained to him that he had heard that lakh of tonnes of food grains were lying in the godowns of the Corporation and that there was a proposal to dump it in the sea, to make storage space for the next crop. When Manoj Parida, Senior Regional Manager of the Food Corporation of India, was interviewed on the Star TV news channel, he said that he could only give the grain to the states if the central government allocated it, and that his dilemma was that he couldn't just throw it away!

In 1988, in the case of Pradeep Kishen, when starvation deaths were brought to the notice of the Apex Court, the court accepted the assurances of the Government of Orissa that the situation would be looked into, and hoped that starvation deaths would cease. Ten years later, another petition was filed, detailing hundreds of starvation deaths. In 2001, when Kavita Srivastava of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Rajasthan, filed a petition, the condition of the people had not changed.

## **NO WILL TO ACT**

Why is it that with 60 million tonnes of grain in surplus of the buffer stock, India still has hunger on this scale? Why are half of India's children malnourished? No answer. Shanta Kumar, the minister responsible, remains unruffled despite widespread condemnation. And the Prime Minister appeared on television recently to say that the reports of starvation deaths are false and politically motivated.

All this in a situation where it has been calculated that it is cheaper to give this grain away free to the poor than to transport and store it! A compassionate court would have none of that. It found it incomprehensible that a litigant would have to move the highest court merely for a direction to government to implement its own schemes.

"Cut the flab somewhere else", said the Court when confronted the argument that the states had no funds to feed hungry children. From the Ratlam Municipality case

onwards, the Apex Court has held that when it comes to the enforcement of a fundamental right, courts will not entertain the argument of financial incapacity.

Hunger spreads not because the State lacks the funds to act but it chooses to use its money elsewhere in what V.R. Krishna Iyer once called “a perverse expenditure logic”. A second aircraft carrier for the Navy, to be purchased soon, will cost a thousand crore, an amount that could feed all of this nation’s children. But macho muscle flexing is more important than that! And we have examples of ostentation such as the foreign trip of the Vice President of India, Krishna Kant, and his family, at the State’s expense.

### **SCHEMES IN DISARRAY**

As a result of this trend, we are now in a situation worse than the colonial era. Governments do not care that people remain illiterate or in ill health, not even if they die. It just does not matter.

The British evolved a Famine Code, which ensured that anyone needing food in a famine area had only to turn up at a work site - a road, a school building, and a watershed management programme – to get work. At the end of the day, she would get half of her wages in grain. Famine records show that the prompt implementation of food for work programmes reduced hunger and prevented starvation deaths. For those unable to work – the old, infirm and disabled – there was a dole of fifty paise per day.

Fifty years after Independence, this Famine Code is in disuse and the elaborate procedure laid down for tackling famines disregarded. The watered-down remedy – the Employment Assurance Scheme – provided for employment for two family members on food for work projects for 100 days in a year. This was never implemented. And recently, the Prime Minister announced from the Red Fort that the scheme was being upgraded and renamed the Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana. This ‘upgraded’ scheme provided work for only ten days in a year!

The ration card system, the only mechanism in place to feed the poor, is in disarray. In India’s capital, the identification of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families started after the court case and there were many complaints of corruption in the issuing of forms.

The Midday Meal Scheme, introduced as far back as 1995 and requiring a cooked meal to be given to all children in government and government-assisted schools, was implemented fully only in Tamil Nadu. The Delhi government only gave a few biscuits to its schoolchildren.

The Annapoorna Scheme, which provides grain to the poorest of the poor at Rs. 2 per kg was also not implemented. The beneficiaries of the national Old Age Pension Scheme usually received their pensions six months late if at all.

No wonder that the Comptroller & Auditor General, in his Year 2000 Report, found significant systematic weaknesses in the fair price shop system. He found the reports of employment generated not genuine. The Employment Assurance Scheme, which promised a hundred days of food for work, in practice provided only nine days of work. Scarce resources were lost in the labyrinth of a slothful administrative system. The report found one-fifth of rural households facing the prospect of hunger. Forty percent of all households did not get two square meals a day. Concluding, the Computer &

Auditor General found serious flaws in design, execution and monitoring of the schemes.

A study conducted by the Tata Economic Consultancy Services found a large number of bogus ration shops, and 30 per cent of the grain being diverted.

### **SUPREME COURT ORDERS**

The court directed that the targeted public distribution system be fully implemented by January 2002 and that all governments complete their identification of BPL families, issue ration cards and distribute 25 kg of grain per family per month by that date.

A similar order was passed for the Antyodaya Anna Yojana scheme, under which the poorest of the poor get grain at Rs. 2 per kg. The Supreme Court directed that the governments should consider giving the grain free to people who are too poor to buy it. It directed governments to provide a cooked midday meal in all government and government-assisted schools.

It directed governments to implement the National Old Age Pension Scheme fully by January 2002 and to make payments of pension by the seventh of each month.

Similarly directions were made in respect of the Annapoorna Scheme, the Integrated Child Development Scheme, the National Maternity Benefit Scheme and the National Family Benefit Scheme.

The final order is dated 8.5.02. In this order the gram panchayats have been empowered to frame the Food-for-Work schemes, wherein special emphasis is to be given for the poor, women and dalits. Contractors are prohibited. The gram sabhas are also empowered to conduct a social audit of all the food and employment schemes and to report instances of misuse of funds. On such reports being made, the authorities are required to punish the guilty. The gram sabhas are also empowered to monitor the implementation of the various schemes and to have access to relevant information as to how beneficiaries are selected and how benefits are disbursed. A grievance redressal procedure is set out in this order. Complaints of non implementation of the Supreme Court's order is to be made to the CEO/Collector and these complaints are to be acknowledged with a receipt. Ultimately it is the Chief Secretary who is made responsible. Dr. N.C. Saxena, former Planning Secretary and Mr. S.R. Shankaran, former Secretary, Rural Development have been appointed as commissioners of the Supreme Court for the purpose of looking into people's grievances. The Supreme Court has also directed government to frame clear guidelines for the proper identification of BPL families as there were complaints that this criteria is neither clear nor uniform. Ration shops have been directed to remain open throughout the month during fixed hours, the details of which should be displayed on notice board.

### **TRANSPARENCY**

Most officials do not know of the schemes in their own jurisdiction. There is no way for people in a village to know what schemes they are entitled to. The order of the Court in the Rajasthan PUCL case will hopefully change the situation for the better. A translated copy of the Supreme Court order and the list of the beneficiaries of each scheme are to

be displayed on every *gram panchayat* notice board and in schools. Doordarshan and AIR are to publicise the schemes.

All said and done, even with the Apex Court order, the level of compliance will go up to, say, 35 per cent. Hunger will remain institutionalised. As long as priorities do not change, half of India's population will be kept deliberately hungry by State policy. Only a revolution can change that.

STATE SUPPORT FOR THE POOR:WHAT DOES IT ADD UP TO?

(Rupees per person below the poverty line, per day 2000 – 2001)

DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAMMES	Rs. 1.4
OTHER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM	Rs. 0.4
OTHER SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES	Rs. 03.
TOTAL	Rs. 2.1

(Source: Data base of PUCL vs. Union of India Case, pending in the Supreme Court.)

## SABOTAGING WELFARE

Madhura Swaminathan in her recent publication “Weakening Welfare” has studied the Public Distribution System (PDS) in India. Noticing that food deprivation and insecurity persists on a mass scale, she concludes that this situation of mass deprivation is likely to worsen in the current context of “liberalisation, structural adjustment and the weakening of welfare systems”. She argues that there is need to expand and strengthen - not undermine or disband the PDS system. She has identified ‘targeting’ as a dangerous policy introduced as a mechanism to ultimately close down the PDS. This part of the article is largely taken from her book.

### ➤ HISTORY OF PDS

1964:	FCI set up a sole central agency for procurement, storage, transportation and distribution of food commodities viz. rice, wheat, sugar, edible oils, kerosene and coal.
1964-1978:	Drought of 1965/67 and 1972/73 provided strong impetus for the expansion of PDS.
1978-1991	Food grain distribution through PDS peaked in 1991 at 20.8 MT.
1991 onwards	Food grain distributed through PDS falls substantially to 14 MT in 1994. Stocks accumulate. Between 1991 and 1994 PDS process double. The poor are priced out. Sales drop. Stocks build up. At this point because global prices are temporarily high export taken place at the cost of nutrition in India.
1997	Targetting introduced.
	Between 1998 and 2001
	APL prices were increased 85% (wheat) and 61% (rice) and BPL prices by 66% and 62% respectively.

### ➤ THE SPECTRE OF MASS HUNGER

The National Sample Survey data, shows that **per capita consumption of cereals declined in every state except Kerala in both urban and rural areas**. A shift is noticed from cereals to other food items of lesser nutrition among the poor. This exacerbates undernourishment.

Nutritional surveys done by the National Nutrition Monitoring Board confirms this inadequacy of food (and cereal) intake by large parts of the population will below the recommended intake of 460 grams. Referring to “hidden hunger” it found an inadequate intake of micronutrients, which play a critical role in body functioning.

The National Sample Survey Organisation found in 17 of India’s most populous states that **the average caloric intake declined between 1972 and 1994**. The decline was particularly sharp in rural areas.

At the all-India level total calories per head in rural areas has fallen on 2149 by 1999-2000 compared to 2211 in 1983, a decline by 72 calories per head. This level of 2149 calories per head in 1999-2000 is substantially lower than China or Brazil's level of 2757 calories and 2797 calories in 1993. It is also lower than Tanzania or Kenya's level of 1980.

A commonly used indicator of undernourishment is Body Mass Index (BMI). This the ratio of weight (kg) to the square of height (m). 18.5 is normal. Using this indicator, Shetty and James found 46% of persons chronically deficient in 1991-1992. Severe undernourishment was observed among 9%. In other words **one half of the population in the country is malnourished**. Of these 53% of children were found to be undernourished and **21% severally undernourished**.

### ➤ POVERTY LINE EXCLUDES MANY HUNGRY PERSONS

The original standard for the definition of the poor was thrice the food expenditure as it was shown that poor families spend 1/3 of their expenditure on food. Any household that spends more than 1/3 of its income on food is considered poor in the United States and eligible for food stamps. If this standard is used in India **95% of all households would be considered poor. If one uses the China standard of a food share of 60%, then 80% of the rural population and 60% of the urban population would be poor**. Thus in India, at most the top 20% of the population can be excluded from systems of food security.

When there is mass hunger the weight attached to every undernourished person who is wrongly excluded should be much higher than the weight attached to a rich person who benefits from the scheme.

The conclusion drawn by Swaminathan is that **the proportion of persons suffering deprivations in food and nutrition is higher than those below the poverty line**. For example 37% of urban household were BPL in 1993-94 while 80% of household were calorie deficit.

If the objective of PDS is food security then **it should also look at those facing the risk of undernourishment**. While anthropometric measures suggest 50% adults are undernourishment, 70% of households are deficient in food consumption.

She concludes; chronic hunger persists on a mass scale in India.

### ➤ STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND THE DECLINE IN PER CAPITA OFFTAKE

There are sharp regional variations in total and per capita offtake. Some of the southern states, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, accounted for almost one half of the PDS offtake of grain in the country. By contrast the four northern states Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh accounted for only 10% in 1995. Kerala was undoubtedly the leader with a fair system of public delivery. The average per capita offtake was 53.3 kg. per year as compared to 2.3 kg. in Bihar and 4.6 in Madhya Pradesh.

The most striking feature of immediate post structural adjustment (1991-1995) was the widespread decline in per capita offtake.

In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in 1987, 98% of the rural population did not purchase any grain from PDS. In Kerala by contrast, 87% of the population purchased grain from PDS. The data indicated that **PDS was not serving the vast majority of the country's population** and that there was a near total collapse of the PDS system in Bihar and some northern states.

#### ➤ CORRUPTION AND MALADMINISTRATION

In Thane district in Maharashtra, Swaminathan found that ration cards of scheduled tribes showed full offtake though the tribes had not purchased food from the ration shops. Other researches have found bogus ration cards, poor quality grains and short weighing of foods. Researchers have estimated that **only 17% of the wheat lifted from the FCI by the state governments reaches the final consumer in Bihar!**

Insufficient supply of grains was the most important reason given for not using PDS. 40% did not buy grain because there was none to be brought.

#### ➤ TARGETS, FOOD STAMPS AND OTHER RACKETS

##### ◆ MEXICO

Charges began in the 80's when food subsidies were cut by 80%. In April 1986 a targeted food stamps programme was started where stamps could be exchanged for food. Targetting was done in three ways. First there was an income criterion where only those with an income less than twice the minimum wage were eligible. Then there was geographical targetting of low income neighbourhoods. Thirdly there was self targetting as households had to go to a particular place to register. Targetting led to a fall in the number of households receiving subsidised food. **The decline was 80% between 1983 and 1987.** Secondly the market price of food rose sharply. **In 1982 the basic food basket was 30% the minimum wage; it rose to 125% in 1990.**

##### ◆ SRI LANKA

For more than 30 years Sri Lanka had an effective universal system of heavily subsidised food rationing. The individual entitlement was 7.2 Kg of rice per month. In 1972 a distinction was made between persons paying income tax and those not paying. In 1977, encouraged by the IMF, it was decided to cut food subsidies. The IMF wanted food subsidies to go completely whereas government wanted to maintain the food subsidy for the bottom 40% of the population. In 1978 targetting was introduced with an income qualification. In 1979 there was a shift to the targetted food stamp programme. As a result **there was a fall of 50% in the participating households.** A significant proportion of low income groups were excluded from the food stamp programme. Then the value of food stamps declined as inflation increased causing the food subsidy to decrease. The prices of food commodities rose sharply. In the evaluation of the scheme the Ministry of Plan Implementation found more families put at risk nutritionally,

a decline in per capita calorie intake of the poor and increase in the proportion of children suffering from acute malnutrition.

◆ ZAMBIA

In January 1989 food coupons were introduced and in July targetting on the basis of income began. Many poor households were excluded and food security worsened.

◆ JAMAICA

Upto 1984, there was a system of generalised price subsidies. In 1984 these were eliminated and replaced by food stamps and a school feeding programme. There were two target groups. The first category included pregnant or lactating women, children under 5, the elderly, poor and the disabled. The second category included those below a particular income level. This standard was lower than the cut-off used by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica to identify the lowest income group.

As a result **government spending on food subsidies fell dramatically. While 1% of GNP was spent on food subsidies in 1972, spending on food stamps in 1994 was only 0.23%. Spending in 1994 was only 57% of the 1991 level in real terms.** Secondly the real value of stamps fell by 17%. Thirdly high inflation led to a steep rise in the cost of the minimum food basket. **In October 1984 for example the cost of the minimum food basket was three times the minimum wage.** Fourthly the number of participants were restricted. Fifthly many of the poor were excluded because their identification was based on crude surveys with no attempts to verify reported income except through observing “quality of housing and consumer goods” during a brief home visit. There was no system of continuous verification or registration. Participants had to collect the stamps on certain days of the month. As a result of all this it was found in 1988 that 53% of households in the **poorest quintile were not receiving food stamps. 63% of households with pregnant or lactating women were excluded. 50% of the household with malnourished children were denied benefits. In the poorest quintile of households with elderly persons, 45% were excluded from food stamps. This situation worsened in the 80’s.**

◆ TUNISIA

In December, 1993 a doubling of the prices of cereals was announced. There were widespread and spontaneous “bread riots”. The President rescinded the price increases. In the early 1990’s as part of a structural adjustment loan, targetting was introduced. The extensive and successful system prevailing in Tunisia since the 1970’s came under attack. Expenditures on food subsidies fell. In 1993 food subsidies accounted for 2% of GDP as compared to 4% a decade earlier. Between 1990 and 1993 there was a 14% fall in caloric intake and a 16% fall in protein intake.

◆ COLUMBIA

A study done by Pinstrup and Anderson in 1993 found the food subsidy programme targetted out of existence.

### India: Sabotaging PDS

In recent times advisors to the G.O.I. and the World bank have suggested a shift from PDS to a system of food stamps or coupons. Such advice generally ignores - not only the experience of other countries but also the inherent difficulties in implementing such a system, Swaminathan points out that a food stamp system entails extensive book keeping, revalidating of coupons and the possibility of fraud by the counterfeiting of coupons.

Two major moves were made by government of India to sabotage the PDS system; in all probability with the nudging of the WB and the IMF. The first came in 1992 with the Revamped PDS (RPDS) and the second in 1997 with Targetted PDS (TPDS). This come together with another **major policy shift in the 1990's away from the agricultural strategy of self sufficiency in food grains production.**

One way of weakening the PDS in the early 1990's was by repeatedly raising the price in the PDS shops. These prices were increased to such an extent that the cumulative price increase of food grains in the PDS shops was higher than the rise in the general price index. Coupled with this government sharply reduced the supply of food grain to the PDS since 1991. Thus from 1991-1998 there was a fall in per capita offtake.

Revamped PDS involved tagretting specific areas such as drought prone, desert, tribal, hilly and urban slum areas. Targetted PDS used the poverty line to demarcate poor and non poor. This system was so arbitrary and irrational that it resulted in large numbers of poor persons being excluded. There was no method at all to determine whether the family fell below the poverty line. The income criterion was not followed in most states and particularly in the rural areas as following the started income criterion would result in 90% of households falling below the poverty line. Reports from many rural areas indicated households were classified as falling below the poverty line on the basis of visual inspection as to whether the household had a tiled roof or a mud floor. In many tribal areas poor families were excluded if they stated that they ate meat!

Swaminathan's study of the revamped and targetted PDS found that entitlements were lower in the revamped PDS areas than under general PDS. She found that **retail prices in PDS shops in Maharashtra were the highest in the country and rising faster than at the national level. As a result quantities of grain sold were falling since 1991.** Targetting had replaced the per capita norm by the family norm. Using the poverty line resulted in misidentification of households and mistargetting.

Moghe in his study of Maharashtra found that when targetted PDS was announced there were **60 lakhs** households, according to the central government, eligible for BPL category. The state restricted this number to **43 lakhs.**

In slums, households were classified as BPL or APL on the basis of a few queries resulting in **absurdly low numbers.** In Dhavari, Asia's largest slum with a population of 0.5 million, the Rationing Control Officer identified only 365 PBL families in 1997 and after 're-checks' the number fell to 151 in 1999!

The World Bank has recommended that PDS be targetted to the "very poor" and that a distinction be drawn between the "very poor" and the "moderately poor" to improve transfer of food to the "ultra poor". The very poor are defined as households that have

expenditure less than 3/4 the BPL expenditures. The remaining 1/4 are defined as moderately poor. In short an extremely narrow form of targetting is being propagated to groups within the poor. This, Swaminathan concludes, is most undesirable. What we need is a system of near universal provision. At most the top 20% of the population can be excluded.

When there is mass hunger, the weight attended to every undernourished person who is wrongly excluded should be much higher than the weight attended to a rich person who benefits from a scheme.

When there is targetting especially with a low income cut-off, errors in measurements can mean disqualification for genuinely poor person. Secondly there is an incentive to cheat. Thirdly time specific cut-offs makes little sense when there is downward income mobility. Gaiha in his 1987 study found that 13% of the non poor in 1968 had become poor in 1970.

### Globalisation and the planned destruction of India agricultural production

Usa Patnaik has written on this issue. In this part of the article we rely on her inputs.

Food grain output dropped sharply to 1.66% (1999-2000) compared to 3.54% for the previous decade. There was a **decline of 8 million ha in the area sown to food grains**. The sharp cut back in government rural development expenditures reduced growth in rural employment to only 0.6% (1993-1999) as compared to 2% (1987-1993).

Surplus production of a few 'advanced countries' accounts for 4/5 of the global trade in cereals. These countries have focussed their attention on the markets of the 'developing world'. To penetrate these economics and attack their agricultural production systems, the advanced countries ensured that their export of grain would be at very low prices as to make local prices appear exorbitant. One of the ways in which the prices were kept artificially low was by the grant of large subsidies to the farming sector including grants to agro - business corporations.

During 1980 to 1986, for example, cereal prices fell by ¼ the US increased the Producer Subsidy Equivalent (PSE) as a % of total value of agricultural output from 9% to an astronomical 45%. European countries followed suit. Ten European countries raised the PSE to agricultural output percentage from 25 to 66 while Japan raised it from 71 to 93. These highly inflated mid-80's subsidy levels were then deliberately made the base from which a mere one fifth cut was undertaken by advanced countries in the Agreement on Agricultural of GATT in 1994.

There is another indicator of farm subsidies. It is called the "Total Support Estimate (TSE) ". This is the figure of total support to farmers. The USA which had reduced its TSE to 34% of it value of agricultural production by 1997, raised it by 51% in 1991 and then hugely in 2002 thus transferring between 71 to 96 billion dollars between 1997 and 1999 to the farm sector. There is a farm bill before the US Congress proposing to pay additional subsidies of 73.5 billion over the next 10 years. Similarly the 24 OECD countries including Japan increased their TSE from 46.5% in 1997 to 59.4% by 1999.

As a result the global prices of major staples like rice, wheat and maize have been halved and developing countries where protection has been removed have become vulnerable.

The proponents of globalisation thus have double standards. While massively subsidising their farm sector including massive agro- corporations, the argument is simultaneously made in the developing world for subsidies to be removed! Advanced countries have through incessant pressure applied through WTO succeed in getting quantitative restrictions removed fully years before the mandatory date. They are now pushing for the winding up of the PDS. Thus opening up to free trade in agriculture is taking place at the worst possible time when global food prices have been crashing.

After grain inputs for Eastern Europe and CIS countries declined sharply in the early 1990's, the USA turned its attention to penetrating South East Asian countries using the familiar rhetoric that all subsidies were bad. The Philippines, for example, gave up its functioning grain procurement and distribution system and became a net importer of US grain.

### SUICIDES

In India, liberalised trade policies, have resulted in massive losses for farmers. Farmer in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and other states have been devastated. Many have committed suicide. Cotton farmers have been killing themselves since 1998. IN the first month of 2002 above 25 new cases of suicide were reported from Andhra Pradesh. Many have resorted to selling body parts such as kidneys. Recovery proceedings have resulted in the taking away of land, houses, farming tools and equipment and even household articles including utensils!

### Food subsidy low: not a burden

Swaminathan has demolished the myth that the 'burden' of food subsidies is too high pointing out that food subsidy as a % of GDP has remained unchanged over the last 31 years at 0.31% of GDP. This compares favourably with Sri Lanka (1.3% in 1984), Mexico (0.63% in 1984) and Tunisia (2% in 1993).

### ➤ KERALA LEADS THE WAY

According to Swaminathan, the Kerala experience shows that with political commitment food security can be obtained. The establishment of an effective PDS system in Kerala was the outcome of a strong peoples movement for food. As a result the coverage is almost universal. In 1996, 95% of households were covered. The poor depend on and use PDS more than the rich. The functioning and delivery system is better than other states.

### Where do you stand, Mr. Amartya Sen?

Amartya Sen's support for the movement to save the PDS is crucial. His support would mean much. His position however is not clear.

There are broadly two camps. The pro-PDS and anti-PDS. Both speak of concern for the poor, so the debate can be confusing.

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| The pro-PDS camp      | - Seek the expansion and strengthening of PDS   |
| (anti globalisation ) | - Universal coverage  |
|                       | - Increased subsidies or at least the present level   |
|                       | - Continued procurement from farmers (reforms are fine if poor farmers and not the rich benefit from procurement) |
| The anti -PDS camp    | - Seek an end to PDS  |
| (Pro-globalisation)   | - A end to procurement  |
|                       | - Free market as the solution   |
|                       | - Food stamps as a replacement for PDS  |

## SUMMARY

- Subsidies to farmers in India is low as compared internationally.
- Advanced countries have increased their farm subsidies astronomically in order to flood South East Asia with cheap grain.
- To achieve increased exports to India, advanced countries need to convince the India Government to reduce subsidies, undermine PDS and allow free import of grain.
- The Indian Government has been a slave to WTO and compromised Indian interests.
- Targetting the PDS has been a monumental mistake.
- The PDS need to be strengthened. Universal coverage should be reintroduced.
- A massive food-for-work programme only can tackle the spectre of mass hunger.