

>

Title: Need to redefine the parameters for determination of poverty level with a view to have an equitable allocation of funds for the poverty alleviation programmes.

SHRI JOSE K. MANI (KOTTAYAM): For long, India has been evolving poverty alleviation policies and programmes using questionable parameters for determining poverty levels in the country, thereby implementing the programmes and projects targeted for families living Below Poverty Line (BPL). Mostly our Public Distribution System (PDS) and delivery of social welfare measures revolve around concept of poverty levels. The dividing line between the privileged and the under-privileged has become blurred beyond recognition as pointed out in the latest United Nations Social Development Index.

The incidence of poverty is common to all strata of society irrespective of the income levels, as has been proved by the recent global recession. Globally, there are diverse and varied benchmarks to determine the levels of poverty, wherein arises the contradictions. According to the World Bank benchmark, those with daily incomes of below one dollar are identified as the poor. However, while there has been a decline in the poverty level globally, over the past two and half decades, the incidence of hunger among the vulnerable has only increased, as per a study conducted by United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN-FAO). The report also reveals that mere economic development need not translate into poverty alleviation.

Though the government's efforts in the area of poverty alleviation are laudable, the targeting of the beneficiaries has been faulty, says the findings of the UN report. Since the UN and the World Bank have been funding India's poverty alleviation programmes in a major way, we should consider mid-course corrections of our assessments on poverty levels, hitherto based on wrong assumptions.

I would, therefore, urge the Government to redefine the concept of determining the poverty levels across all strata of society for equitable and meaningful allocation of funds for the poverty alleviation programmes.

---