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# Endangered Humanity

Hungry Faces, Angry River

Report of Public Tribunal Inquiring into  
Starvation Deaths at Jalangi



a MASUM and AHRC publication



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## **Endangered Humanity ; Hungry Faces, Angry River**

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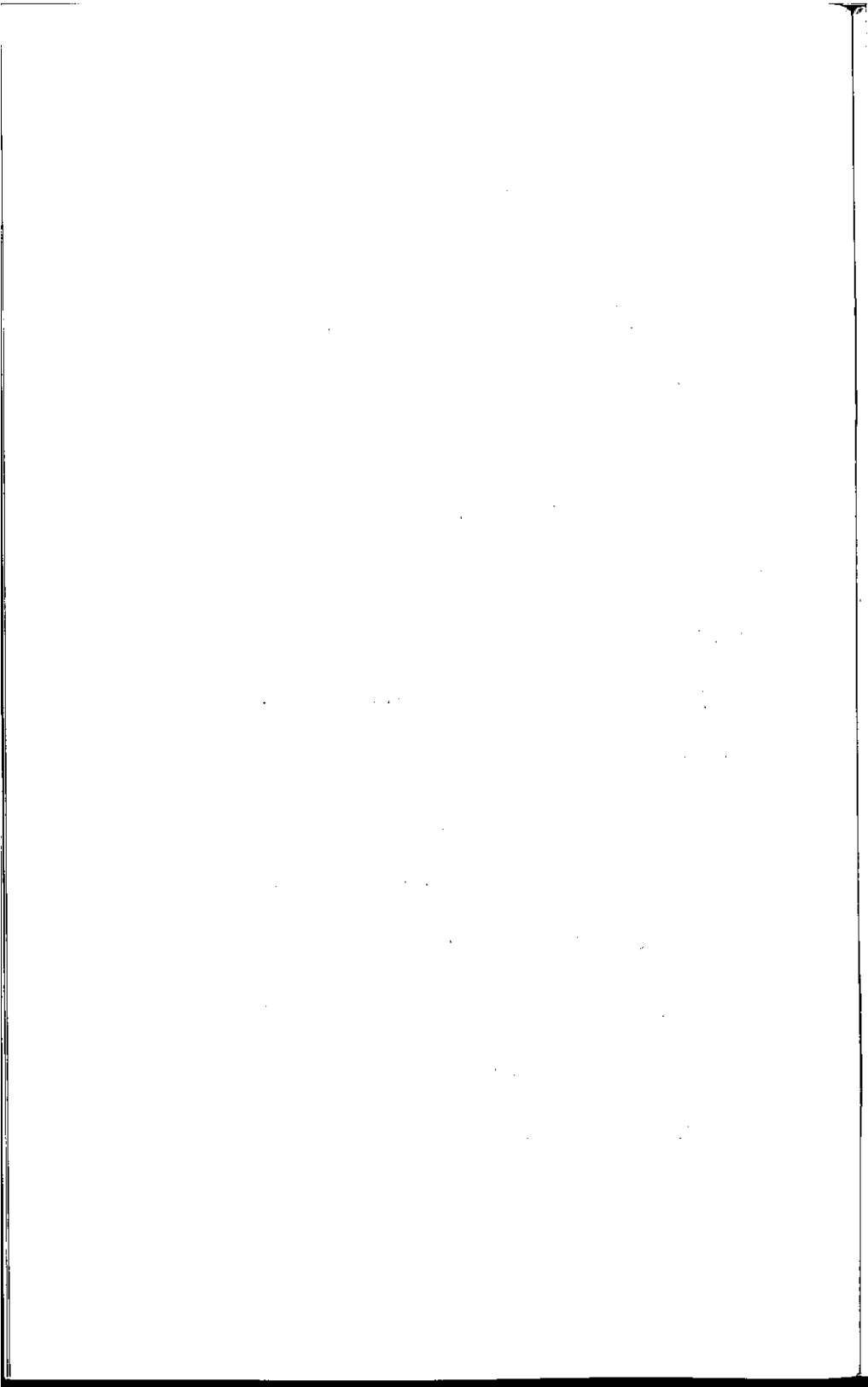
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## FOREWARD

MASUM (Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha), a human rights organization, founded in 1997, with a group of activists focusing the activity of the organization mainly against custodial torture and violence. We were firm in selecting this option and gave stress to fight against all custodial tortures and police atrocities, in the vast arena and ever-increasing compound of the definition of human rights.

In 2004, we came across a number of reports of different medias over starvation deaths in different parts of West Bengal. Initially, we tried to avoid in pursuing the issue of starvation and kept it out of our agenda, primarily because of the fact that it was without our targeted periphery and secondly, the matter was quite complex and the issue of starvation deaths around West Bengal as well as in India are its deep rooted socio, economic and political problems which we can hardly address from our small platform of human rights organization. But we could not ignore such miserable condition of a large section of our fellow countrymen, whose right to life were systematically denied for long time. At the same time, the AHRC, our partner organization and a number of our friends had been expressing their concern for this human disaster.

We did not know a single person in Jalangi block, Murshidabad. We went to Jalangi bazaar and started to contact people who were badly affected by starvation and facing death. We went into remote villages - Biswaspara, Dayarampur, Parashpur, Taltali, Farazipara and others within Jalangi block. The area was, once very fertile and famous for cultivating Jute, Paddy, Sugar cane etc. Even on one occasion Dayarampur was declared as 'Model Village' by state administrative authority. Situated on the bank of river the Padma, which acts as the natural border between India and Bangladesh. The main cause of the plight of the people is changing the course of the river continuously and thus eroding the fertile land to the riverbed. The people said the river intruded into Indian Territory about 9-10 km. inside erasing numberless villages from the geographical map. Out of 14 *mouzas*, only 7 remain. Since agriculture is the main occupation of the villagers, losing lands, homes, crops into the river-

bed; the once affluent peasants became penniless. The people are dying like ants due to poverty and without any legal occupation. The starvation looms large on this area at Jalangi block. We confronted several painstaking, heart-breaking scenes. Mostly affected people are women, aged and children. The families are deserting old and sick members. There is no rehabilitation programme of the State Government for these ill-fated villagers. When people takes refuge in others area, they are humiliated, creating tension in the locality. The children are eating rubbish out of hunger and dying. Women are forced to enter into flesh-trade for survival. The families are devastated and displaced sometime without trace generating volumes of Internally displaced persons.

In search of the helping hand in the locality, firstly we noticed the government authorities as non-existent one and the political parties and Panchayat are non-functioning and giving only lip service. Jalangi seemed to us an example; how the so-called decentralisation of power, i.e. the *Panchayati Raj* has become a farce by the lefts, in the last 28 years. We met the Block Development Office, Relief Officer of the block, The District Magistrate and other government officers and also Panchayat Pradhan, Panchayat Samity for releasing relief to the affected people and to do the needful. There are so many government programmes are going on in black and white in the area, such as Annapurna Yojna, Antodaya, B.P.L schemes, GRs, but practically, the relief seldom reached in the hands of the affected people. Sometimes, quality of the food-grains are not fit for human consumption and the misery of the starving people continued. All-round corruption is omnipresent. Despite, repeated reporting on different electronic and print media, starvation at Jalangi failed to move the administration. The administration and government machinery remained a mute spectator except sporadic visit of the bureaucrats. Such cruel and callous attitude of the government authorities are shocking.

We found boulders for embankment have been stacked beside the roads away from the place of river line for months together. We enquired and found that local Panchayat administration kept the work pending due to their internal disputes over the choice of suit-



able and loyal contractor. The matter was drawn into the notice of the B.D.O, D.M., Irrigation Department but the administration at the grass root level of Panchayat seemed more powerful than any authority in its inaction.

The agriculturists lost their land and livelihood. Without any legal means for survival, the obvious choice is illegal one. The border of Bangladesh is not far away and the lure of easy money is smuggling. All the kingpins of local smugglers have nexus with the local police, BSF, Customs Officers and leaders of the political parties, mainly the ruling one. The don of the smuggler is a elected member of local *Panchayet Samity*. So, a large section of the villagers fell into the trap of the smugglers for their livelihood.

A large area where human beings affected by malnutrition lacks basic infrastructure of health care. The nearest Rural Hospital, Sadikhandear, run by the Health Department is known for its notoriety. There is no medical facilities despite medicines are allotted and supplied by authorities for every hospital. Badar Mondal, aged 52, a leprosy patient died of starvation and devoid of any treatment in the hospital on 10 January, 2006.

Even when we contacted and met Unicef, local chapter of the international organization, on several times for the plights of the starved children of Jalangi, that also bore no fruits for Governmental paraphernalia.

It is not that nothing can be done. In our experience, we have seen that in one case at Bellilious Park, at Howrah, a victim of forced eviction, named E. M. Parvathi was reeling under severe poverty and lost her husband and 3 children due to starvation. We made complaint everywhere and even placed the case to the Governor, Mr. Gopal Krishna Gandhi. The Governor in his exceptional gesture on his own initiation arranged free education for remaining child of E. M. Parvathi and provided monthly financial assistance.

However, to draw the attention of civil society, both in national and international forums, we arranged a Public Tribunal with the help of Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong to find

the fact of starvation death. The tribunal got tremendous response in Jalangi and it was organized on 23 and 24 September 2005. The Tribunal was constituted with number of retired High Court Judges, medical practitioners, lawyers, social workers, and human rights activists. We are publishing the full reports of the Tribunal, which found with evidence that our concern of people of Jalangi was correct. The people are dying and the government authorities are mute spectators. The good governance is far cry; even there is no governance at all effective at the remote place at the villages of Jalangi block. The total break down of the rule of law and denial of human rights are apparent on the face of record.

We hope, the compilation with the report of the tribunal and documents will shake the conscience of the civil society to take stance for the part of the humanity and raise their voices in search of justice.



(Kirity Roy)  
Secretary  
MASUM

## INTRODUCTION

On 10 June, 2004 when the news of death by starvation of five tribals at Amlasol in West Medinipur district in West Bengal appeared in a section of the Kolkata press, the initial public reaction was one of shock and surprise. Many found it hard to believe that at Amlasol some people who were not beggars had died only because they had no food to eat. And it happened in a state where the government has been proudly claiming its exemplary success in rural development and land reforms programme for more than two decades.

As expected, the West Bengal Government refused to accept the fact and tried to explain away the cause of deaths as resulting from malnutrition or chronic ailment. Meanwhile, more news poured in. Investigation revealed that landlessness coupled with loss of traditional livelihood had led to the gradual impoverishment of the Shavar tribals at Amlasol. While some of them had died from hunger, others were actually living on the brink of starvation.

In the face of this revelation, the Chief Minister finally conceded that starvation like situation prevailed in some remote rural areas. That the Amlasol tragedy was the result of official indifference to the people in a backward village in the midst of forests was also borne out by a statement made by Mr. Upen Kisku, the Minister in Charge of backward classes' welfare. On 4 March, 2005 the minister boastfully announced that Amlasol had now undergone a 'radical' change thanks to the development work taken up by the government. By development programme he meant digging tubewells, setting up healthcare centre etc. (The Statesman, 5.3.05).

The Minister thus indirectly admitted that despite the provision of several poverty-alleviation schemes introduced by the central government, Amlasole had so far been cruelly neglected. He also seemed oblivious of the fact that Amlasole was not an isolated case. Only a few days before he made the above statement, another tragedy had taken place in the Jalangi block of Murshidabad district. As reported in the Statesman (22.2.05) one Alimuddin

Sheikh in Dayarampur village at Jalangi had died from hunger. The continuing erosion caused by the river Padma had robbed him of his land and living and turned him almost into a beggar, one year ago. His wife Jaheda, according to the report was also battling for her life and she hadn't had a morsel of food for days together. On 26 February, the same paper would break the news that though the district administration had meanwhile taken care of Jaheda, it was too late. Jaheda died on 25 February and had her name added to the sordid saga of official insensitivity towards the pauperised people living on the Ganga Padma embankments in Malda and Murshidabad districts.

### EROSION

The problem of land erosion along the Ganga-Padma basin in Malda and Murshidabad has been the socio-political agenda for the last years or a little more. The problem, however, is not a recent one. While the erratic nature of the Ganga, in this area, can be traced back to as early as the 13th century, the Bhagirathi, a branch of the Ganga had also changed its course and damaged the adjacent lands and villages several times in the last 150 years. The problem however assumed endemic proportions in the 1970s, following the construction of the Farakka Barrage in Murshidabad. The experts maintain that by obstructing the natural course of the river, the Barrage had definitely aggravated the problem of erosion and contributed to the process of silting at the mouth of the Bhagirathi. According to available statistics, while the Ganga in 1979 damaged 100 and 60 acres of land respectively in Murshidabad and Malda, the amount of land eroded by the river shot up to 400/500 acres in those two districts during 1998-99.

In this note we shall concentrate on Murshidabad and particularly on Jalangi because MASUM sent a fact-finding team to the area; took up the case with the district administration and later set up with the assistance of Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Hong Kong, a Public Tribunal to inquire into the condition of people in the erosion-strikes Jalangi area.

## JALANGI

In the course of the Ganga, Murshidabad occupies a place of significance because it is here that the great river divides into two branches— the Bhagirathi and Padma. Jalangi is particularly important because the Padma takes a south-east turn at this point and traversing around 60km enters Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan). Jalangi is situated almost on the borderline between the two countries and this border issue has also added to the misery of the erosion-affected people, as for example people who have lost their lands due to erosion cannot use the new alluvial land (char) that has come up in the midst of the river. The geo-political borderline between Jalangi and Bangladesh stands in the way of their using the new char-lands for cultivation.

As we have already noted, since the 1970s, lakhs of people living on the Ganga-Padma embankments in Malda and Murshidabad have fallen prey to the wrath of the angry river which retaliates against man-made obstruction by devouring land and homestead on the embankments. We have heard of the centre-State dialogue on this problem and the steps taken to prevent erosion by setting up boulders and clay dams or 'bandhs'. These measures, however, have failed to stop erosion. The experts attribute the failure to the permanent problem created by the Farakka Barrage. Some also maintain that the Ganga-Padma embankments, in this region, are weakly founded for geological reasons and hence no short-term measure can prevent the erosion menace in Malda and Murshidabad.

Whatever be the reason, the fact remains that people in this area have been losing their agricultural lands, fleeing their homes and reeling poverty and insecurity for decades together. The MASUM team which visited Jalangi in January, 2005 talked to a large number of people and learnt of their plight in the face of continuing land erosion. As there is hardly any alternative means of living, growing landlessness has practically pauperised a considerable section of the peasants in Jalangi.

## PEOPLE'S PLIGHT

In Murshidabad, the Jalangi block is situated by the bank of the Padma. It consists of 14 mouzas with a 9000 strong population.

The village elders can distinctly remember that only seven or eight years back, Jalangi was about four kilometres away from the Indo - Bangla border. The position has now completely changed because by devouring land, the Padma has reduced the dividing line and made the condition of the local people extremely vulnerable. As MASUM found, about 600 families in Udaynagar, Dayarampur, Paraspur, Taltali, Suryanagar and some other villages in Jalangi are now living on starvation diet, and with the Padma fast approaching, hundreds of people are facing the threat of being uprooted any day. The local people told the MASUM team that hundreds of families have already lost their homes and some other hundreds have left their places for fear of being gobbled up by the river. Meanwhile, a number of young girls have been taken away and forced into the flesh trade in urban areas.

The villagers also added that several meetings with the BDO and other officials of the local administration were of no avail. As in Amlasole, so in Jalangi, none of the special schemes meant for people living Below the Poverty Line (BPL) has been properly implemented. Many people haven't heard the names of such schemes as Antyodaya, Anna Yojana, Gramin Rojgar Yojana, Annapurna Yojana or the recent Mid-day meal scheme for school children. We present below some of the statements made by villagers in Jaykrishnapur. The statements, combined together, constitute a tragic story of human misery on the one hand and the apathy of a heartless administration on the other.

Bisad Mondol, aged 70, lost 12 bighas of cultivable land. In 1995 the BDO granted him Rs. 900 as compensation; but in reality he got Rs. 800 since he was forced to donate Rs. 100 to the party fund of the ruling CPI(M). The same story was repeated by Nahul Sarkar and Sukchand Mondal both of them had to 'donate' Rs. 100 to 'party fund.'

Saibal Mondal, aged 50, told the MASUM team that his land had been washed away by the river. Since then his family has been living under abject conditions and unable to bear the growing poverty his daughter has committed suicide. He has received neither any compensation for his lost land nor any kind of financial assistance under any official scheme.

Abdul Rezzak shah alleged that though he has lost his land, he hasn't yet received any compensation, not even a BPL card. Abdul is now desperately trying to maintain his family by working as a rickshaw puller. Kultoli Bibi, who is living in acute poverty hasn't ever seen a BPL card; whereas Sukchand Mondal, even as he is a cardholder of Antyodaya Yojana alleged that it made little difference whether one got one such a card or not.

This endless story of deprivation was confirmed by Mr. Santosh Roy, the Anchal Pradhan of Ghospara Panchyat. He admitted that Food for Work programme had not been implemented in his area and BPL cards hadn't yet reached out to around 500 vulnerable families. Mrs. Shamsara Begam, Panchyat Pradhan, also agreed that Jalangi was worst affected by erosion and many people there were living in acute poverty. She however ruled out any case of death by starvation. All the officials we met shared our observation that people in Jalangi were living in a dismal condition plagued with landlessness, unemployment, lack of healthcare services, to name a few. Dr. Ashis Ghosh, a local Medical Officer admitted that they don't have the proper medical infrastructure to treat the people suffering from starvation and malnutrition. Dr. Motiur Rahaman of Baharampur District Hospital ruefully remarked that the Jalangi people who were being referred to his hospital were too weak to utter a word and there was little chance for their recovery and survival.

### MASUM'S ROLE

Since January last year, MASUM has been in touch with the local administration and trying to draw their attention to the miserable condition prevailing in Jalangi. We have met the local

officials, submitted memorandums to the District Magistrate (D.M.) and Block Development Officer (B.D.O.) of Jalangi stressing the need for immediate rehabilitation of the uprooted families and providing employment or financial assistance to those living on the verge of starvation. In July, MASUM informed the Additional District Magistrate Mr. Gulam Ali Ansari that the foodgrain sent to Daya rampur village was not fit for human consumption. MASUM also brought the matter to the notice of the D.M. Mr. N.M. Prasad. The DM however maintained that the quality of rice sent to Dayarampur was good.

Meanwhile, not happy with the official response, MASUM took up the Jalangi case with UNICEF and AHRC; and finally took the initiative to constitute a Public Tribunal together with AHRC. The Tribunal conducted the hearing for two days 23-24 September, visited the erosion- hit places and talked to the affected people. We reproduce the Tribunal's report in the following chapter.

Acknowledgement :

1. R. K. Mukherjee, *The Changing Face of Bengal*, Calcutta University, 1938.
2. Kalyan Rudra, *Ganga Bhangana Katha (in Bangla)*, Mrittika, 2004
3. Supriya Sengupta, *Nadi (in Bangla)*, Jijnasa, 1982
4. *The Ananda Bazar Patrika*, June 2004.
5. *The Statesman*, June 2004, February March 2005.



# REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT PUBLIC TRIBUNAL INQUIRING INTO STARVATION DEATHS AT JALANGI IN THE DISTRICT OF MURSHIDABAD IN THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL, INDIA

## I. INTRODUCTION

On the 23rd and 24th September, 2005 a Public Tribunal consisting of retired judges of different High Courts, physicians and social activists including practising advocates conducted an inquiry into starvation deaths at Jalangi in the district of Murshidabad, West Bengal.

This tribunal was constituted on the joint initiative of the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), a regional human rights organisation based in Hong Kong and Banglar Manabadikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), a human rights organisation based in West Bengal, India to look into the situation of starvation deaths and poverty in Murshidabad district, West Bengal, India.

## II. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Tribunal was constituted in the context of the recent stir created by an extreme human tragedy – ‘starvation deaths’ in various parts of West Bengal. As borne out by the media reports, the victims included plantation workers in tea gardens in North Bengal, Shavar tribes in the Amlashole area of West Medinipur district, marginal peasants in North and South 24 Parganas and those uprooted and impoverished by land erosion in Malda and Murshidabad districts.

The Tribunal concentrates on the erosion – affected people in Murshidabad, particularly in the Jalangi block. The problem of land erosion by the river Padma in Malda and Murshidabad has a long history, which has been outlined in the introductory note. Suffice it to say that it is not only a case of geographical calamity or natural disaster. It entails a sordid saga of official apathy towards a matter of grave concern: continuing human plight; to put it more precisely: poverty, displacement, joblessness leading people to live on the borderline of starvation.

The idea of the Tribunal stems from our belief that the civil society has a duty to hear the victims' experiences and assess the situation that has scripted this tragedy.

The Tribunal conducting public hearing consists of the following 8 members:

Justice Hosbet Suresh -	Former Judge, Mumbai High Court
Justice Samaresh Banerjea -	Former Judge, Calcutta High Court
Justice Malay Sengupta -	Former Acting Chief Justice, Sikkim High Court
Ms. Chandreyi Alam -	Advocate, Calcutta High Court
Ms. Anuradha Talwar -	West Bengal Advisor to the Commissioners of the Supreme Court in Writ Petition 196/2001 pending before the Supreme Court of India
Dr. Prajwal Sengupta -	Sramajbi Hospital, Belur, Howrah
Dr. Lenin Raghubanshi -	Benaras, Uttar Pradesh
Dr. Bikash Bhattacharjya -	Sramajbi Hospital, Belur, Howrah

The Tribunal's task is to make an endeavour to get a clear idea on the following issues:

- i. Whether the Government is conscious of the issue of deaths due to starvation occurring in some remote part of the State of West Bengal general and at Jalangi in the district of Murshidabad in particular?
- ii. Whether the Government is taking steps and eager to take remedial measures to stop recurrence of deaths due to starvation?

### III. THE HEARING

1. On 23rd September, 2005 the tribunal heard the victims at Bankim Bhavan at Jalangi. The tribunal heard cases in three separate benches. The first bench was constituted by Justice H. Suresh and Dr. Lenin. The second bench was constituted by Justice

Samaresh Banerjea, Mrs. Anuradha Talwar and Dr. Prajjwal Sengupta and the third bench was constituted by Justice Malay Sengupta, Ms. Chandreyee Alam and Dr. Bikash Bhattacharjee.

2. The organizers submitted 28 cases before the tribunal. The evidences contained both written complaints and oral testimony of the complainants. Apart from considering the written complaints and the oral testimony of the complainants, the members of the tribunal also visited on 24 September, 2005 some of the affected villages where most of the victims are now staying.

3. Besides the cases placed before the tribunal, a good number of complaints were submitted by the victims through the organizers. Coming to know about the tribunal, about 1500 local people gathered near the venue. The complaints collected from these people were subsequently presented before the tribunal for consideration. The tribunal decided to meticulously scrutinize all these complaints with the assistance of the organizers.

4. On 24 September, the tribunal heard a considerable number of persons in their villages where they narrated their experiences. On the basis of the submissions made before the tribunal and the members' own experience when they visited the victims at their homes, the tribunal would like to make the following primary observations:

#### IV. OBSERVATIONS

1. Jalangi is not only a case of utter indifference by the administration to people's plight but also one of large-scale violation of human rights. The erosion of the embankment of the river Padma which has been going on for the last one decade has resulted in the displacement of people on a large scale. As the tribunal surveyed the place, it became clear that the government has done little to improve the situation. What the tribunal witnessed was human misery expressed in tears and a sense of absolute despair on the face of every one.

2. The tribunal would like to observe that when a person loses his home or land he loses not only his right to shelter or right to property only but also everything. He loses his right to livelihood, right to food, right to health, right to environment, and above all

the right to human dignity. This is what has happened in Jalangi. The internal displacement of a large number of people has plunged them into abject poverty. And poverty is the worst form of violation of human rights.

3. Starvation, the tribunal found, is rampant among men, women and children everywhere. No one is sure of his or her next meal. There is no regular source of income, no proper jobs for many. Those who owned land have become landless overnight. The way, the erosion is going on, calls for immediate intervention. The tribunal witnessed the pathetic sight of an owner of a house situated very close to the river, dismantling his own house to save as much as he can. Starvation is a fact. And a visit to the site and talking to the people cannot but confirm it and move those who are concerned with people's right to live with dignity. (A few photographs taken while the tribunal was at the site are annexed to this report.)

4. The tribunal also found that quite a number of people are illiterate. They just do not know how to meet the situation. Some of them had complained to government offices but there is nothing to show that the government has given them proper attention. In fact many women requested the tribunal whether the tribunal could give them BPL cards. The tribunal has reason to doubt the transparency in the matter of distribution of BPL cards. It is an irony that this district happens to be under the national programme for food for work.

5. On the question of death from starvation the tribunal found some evidence of such death of five persons. There was one case where a hungry child in the absence of her mother ate lime thinking it was curd and the child could not be saved. He was taken to the local doctor who suggested that the child be taken to the government hospital. The staff at the government hospital stated that they had no equipment to treat the child. The tribunal also heard another case where an elderly man died of starvation because he refused to eat, on learning that there was no food for the other members of the family. He just didn't eat and died after about three days. One could argue that these are not starvation deaths; the cause of death could be old age problems, severe stomach pain, tuberculosis, cardiac problems or other ailments. But where hunger

and starvation is almost self - evident, all these deaths can be attributed to hunger, malnutrition and lack of adequate food.

6. Does it make any difference if one loses one's life due to poverty, hunger, starvation or malnutrition? Are they not all interlinked? When a person dies out of poverty or from hunger or starvation or of any ailment due to malnutrition all should mean the same.

7. The tribunal also saw a large number of children who were apparently suffering from night blindness and also from malnutrition. It appeared that there were no considered efforts from the state to address this grave issue. Any ordinary person visiting this place, without having any professional training would find that the majority of the children are suffering from extreme malnutrition. An observation made by Dr. Prajjwal Sengupta on this issue is annexed to this report.

8. With respect to issues of rehabilitation for the people of Jalangi, the tribunal is of the view that the government has not made any concerted effort to eliminate the problems of the internally displaced persons. The inquiry shows that some of the persons have been given by way of dole a BPL card or an Antyodaya card or Annapurna card and some ration cards. All these seem to be halfhearted temporary schemes, not for the purpose of guaranteeing a full meal to everyone every day.

9. What is required is a right-based approach in the matter of rehabilitating all persons affected by the disaster. Human right is not charity. It is a right, which the government has an obligation to protect, preserve and fulfill. A right-based approach can ensure it. For the people to get it is a matter of right to demand whatever is required to live with human dignity. It is in this sense that the government must reconsider their approach, if they have any and come with strategies, which guarantee fulfillment of rights of all affected people.

10. On this basic understanding of the background of the situation and on an analysis of the testimonies, oral and documentary, and other related documents produced before the tribunal, we record the following findings:

## V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) Due to erosion caused by the river Padma the persons who

were staying on the bank of the river have lost their lands, houses and everything they had.

ii) Those who lost their houses and land have erected makeshift huts over private holdings and are under continuous pressure for vacating those lands.

iii) The victims who had their own land and who used to hire workers are now themselves working as agricultural labourers in the absence of any other means of living.

iv) The process of erosion is a continuous one and has been going on for the last 10 to 12 years.

v) The fact is that many *mouzas* / villages have been devoured by the river Padma whereas "chars" have come up in the midst of the river but the victims / complainants cannot claim them to be their own land due to restrictions imposed by the Border Security Force and the civil administration. On the contrary Bangladeshi people are occupying those char lands which formerly belonged to the lands of the victims / complainants of Jalangi, Murshidabad.

vi) Loss of land has rendered the affected villagers totally jobless.

vii) The families which lost their lands are suffering from acute malnutrition and poverty and various ailments are taking their toll on the victims.

viii) The victims / complaints have lost their dignity as human beings and the government and its functionaries are maintaining silence as to the plight of such victims / complainants; and they have not been brought under the purview of different government schemes like food for work programme, below the poverty line programme, Antyodaya and Annapurna Yojana, various ICDS projects and the other government projects meant for the target groups to which the victims / complainants belong to.

ix) A number of victims complained of alleged discrimination being made by the administration in rendering assistance to the victims / complainants on grounds - political and others and that the government is maintaining silence on this issue which must be a matter of serious concern for any government, state or central.

x) The victims / complainants have made representations to the government several times but anything positive is yet to be

done. Although there were programmes for construction of embankments to prevent erosion by the river, the boulders that were brought lay stacked at distant places for a long time. There was thus no attempt to start construction of such embankments.

xi) The members of the tribunal visited different spots at Jalangi Block to get a first - hand evidence of the nature of the disaster. It appears that lands of different mouzas located on paper in land records do not exist anymore in reality.

xii) The villagers having their lands and homes close to the river are themselves demolishing their huts and houses in the apprehension that within a few hours their land and houses will disappear into the river. The villagers were seen to be engaged in demolishing their own houses and salvaging bricks and other building materials.

xiii) The victims / complainants have narrated their respective cases in details to the tribunal. Dr. Prajjwal Sengupta, a member of the panel examined some children, youths and aged persons and the tentative finding of the doctor according to the guidelines of the World Health Organization is that the children of the victims / complainants are suffering from second, third and even fourth grade malnutrition.

xiv) Court no. 1 of the tribunal has come across a few cases where on the basis of the evidence available on record it can be ascertained that starvation deaths have occurred; and of those who are alive, a large number of victims may succumb to death due to starvation and malnutrition unless remedial steps are taken forthwith.

xv) The government, particularly the state government, is yet to properly implement the welfare programmes such as food for work, identification of below poverty level, Antyodaya Yojana, Annapurna Yojana, ICDS and various other schemes in Jalangi.

xvi) The interim order of the Supreme Court of India in writ petition 196/2001 has not been followed in Jalangi. The manner in which the order of the court has been violated is as follows:

a. The people living in these areas have lost their land and

other sources of income and are utterly destitute. Yet they have not been identified as being below the poverty line and poverty - alleviation programmes have not been extended to them.

b. Many of the victims would fall under the categories defined for Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) by the court's order dated 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2003, but the process of identification and extension of the AAY has not been done.

c. The district has been declared as one of the 150 backward districts under the National Food for Work Programme. In spite of this and the order of the Supreme Court to provide the deprived people with work, many people in the area remain deprived and get work for only one or two days in a year.

d. Under the existing programmes, food has not been received properly by the people. The ration shops remain open only 2 days a week, and the shops are providing food grains less than the declared scale to TPDS and AAY beneficiaries; the dealers are overcharging and not providing memos; adulteration of food grains also cannot be ruled out.

e. ICDS centers are providing less than the stipulated amount of 400 calories.

f. Transparency in the matter of giving information about the schemes have not been maintained according to the Supreme Court orders, i.e. beneficiary lists and court orders are not displayed; accounts for Mid - day Meal Scheme are not given to the people and the families are therefore suffering from acute shortage of food.

xvii) The issue of starvation in Jalangi requires to be urgently addressed at different levels of the governments, both the state and the central. Attention of all the NGOs and the International Community needs to be drawn for immediate assistance to the people in Jalangi.

xviii) The state government must immediately provide medical assistance to the villagers in Jalangi in particular so that cases of debility like night blindness, malnutrition and above all starvation can be attended to immediately.

xix) The tribunal would like to suggest to the government that immediate steps should be taken to prevent further engulfment of



land by the river and construction of river embankment of permanent nature. It would prevent on one hand further land from being taken away by the river and would also provide job for the jobless and ensure a decent way of earning livelihood for the victims.

xx) The tribunal noticed with grave concern that beside the village roads of Ghoshpara, Roypara, Dayarampur, Paraspur, Taltali, and other villages there are huge boulders stacked for months together; this points to the carelessness of the administration.

xxi) The tribunal would also suggest that the government should undertake rehabilitation programme for those who have already lost their land and other belongings so that the victims can get rid of the uncertainty of their very existence.

xxii) The tribunal also came across some cases where the male members of some families left their houses in search of a job elsewhere. The government should take care of the children of these particularly vulnerable families.

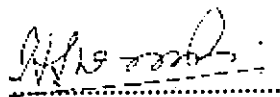
## VI. CONCLUSION

Having analyzed the entire situation mentioned above, the tribunal comes to the conclusion with a grave concern that a complete absence of any government representative at the hearing itself shows the apathy of government machinery. The government was given prior notice along with the copies of written complaints of the victims submitted before the tribunal regarding the hearing clearly mentioning the date, time and venue of the hearing. But none of the official representatives turned up.


Before concluding this report the members of the tribunal call upon the civil society, the government, both state and central, the UNICEF, UNDP, and all other humanitarian organisations as well as the international community to immediately provide assistance to the victims of river erosion in Jalangi so that a workable programme can immediately be undertaken for rehabilitation, compensation and assistance to the victims / complainants.

Members of the Tribunals have received all co-operation from the organizers and the victims / complainants during the public hearing.

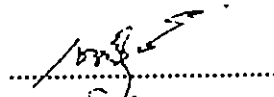
30 November, 2005  
Tribunal members



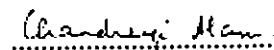
(Hosbet Suresh J)  
Former Judge, High Court, Bombay



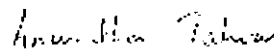
(Samaresh Banerjea J)  
Former Judge, High Court, Calcutta



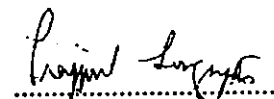
(Malay Sengupta J)  
Former Acting Chief Justice, High  
Court, Sikkim



(Chandreyi Alam)  
Advocate, High Court, Calcutta



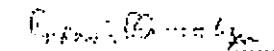
(Anuradha Talwar, Social Activist)



(Prajjwal Sengupta Dr.)



(Lenin Raghubanshi Dr.)



(Bikash Bhattacharjya Dr.)

## FACT FINDING &amp; SURVEY REPORT OF MASUM

List of names of eligible families who were denied of BPL/GR/ Annapurna/ Antyodaya and/or any other welfare schemes run by the state government at Jalangi submitted by Masum to various authorities.

Sl Name	Age	Father/Husband	No. of family members	Village
1. Susil Mondal	60	Late Gobinda Mondal	2	Dayarampur
2. Bhupen Mondal	35	Late Rishipada Mondal	5	Dayarampur
3. Biswanath Mondal	50	Late Gobinda Mondal	5	Dayarampur
4. Santana Mondal	28	Susil Mondal,	3	Dayarampur
5. Abul Kashem Shah	65	Late Kokiluddin Mondal	3	Dayarampur
6. Asraf Shah	35	Abul Kashem	6	Dayarampur
7. Samarendra Nath Sharma	49	Late Kerupada Sharma	5	Dayarampur
8. Shibnath Halдар	52	Ganga Pada Halдар	2	Dayarampur
9. Sentu Sk	35	Afajuddin Sk	5	Dayarampur
10. Gouri Bala Dasi	70	Late Rishipada Mondal	5	Dayarampur
11. Manaranjan Mondal	42	Late Bistopada Mondal	6	Dayarampur
12. Bipad Mondal	39	Late Bistopada Mondal	5	Dayarampur
13. Razzak Shah	39	Abul Kashem Shah	4	Dayarampur
14. Jiarul Shah	36	Abul Kashem Shah	4	Dayarampur
15. Sukhen Mondal	39	Late Rishipada Mondal	5	Dayarampur
16. Nikhil Mondal	47	Late Rishipada Mondal	4	Dayarampur
17. Askan Shah		Abul Hessain	7	Dayarampur
18. Nitai Halдар	62	Late Bijoy Halдар	5	Dayarampur
19. Babu Halдар	28	Late Bijoy Halдар	5	Dayarampur
20. Bikash Halдар	25	Late Bijoy Halдар	3	Dayarampur
21. Sunil Halдар	47	Ananda Halдар	5	Dayarampur
22. Asit Halдар	44	Ananda Halдар	4	Dayarampur
23. Nishipada Halдар	39	Ananda Halдар	2	Dayarampur
24. Susanta Karmakar	35	Suren Karmakar	4	Dayarampur
25. Brindaban Halдар	40	Suren Halдар	3	Dayarampur
26. Tribhanga Halдар	58	Late Balai Halдар	5	Dayarampur
27. Faijuddin Biswas	75	Late Nacheruddin Biswas	3	Dayarampur
28. Bipad Sarma	49	Late Dulal	5	Dayarampur
29. Satyendranath Sharma	56	Late Jugal	6	Dayarampur
30. Laxminarayan Sharma	53	Late Jugal	7	Dayarampur
31. Ranajit Sharma	50	Late Jugal	3	Dayarampur

32. Bapan Sharma	36	Ranjit	3	Dayarampur
33. Moksed Malitha	45	Late Khalil	4	Dayarampur
34. Upendranath Sharma	43	Shyamapada	7	Dayarampur
35. Bhupendranath Sarma	40	Shyamapada	3	Dayarampur
36. Nipendranath Sarma	37	Shyamapada	4	Dayarampur
37. Dilip Sharma	38	Late Gopal	3	Dayarampur
38. Parimal Sharma	42	Late Gopal	4	Dayarampur
39. Phanibhusan Sharma	49	Late Shibnath	3	Dayarampur
40. Santosh Sharma	46	Late Shibnath	5	Dayarampur
41. Subal Sharma	57	Late Shibnath	5	Dayarampur
42. Surjakanta Shinga	43	Son in law in Bistopada Sharma	4	Dayarampur
43. Harendranath Sharma	55	Late Bholanath	5	Dayarampur
44. Alauddin Shah	55	Late Alom Shah	5	Dayarampur
45. Rajaul Shah	45	Late Alom Shah	5	Dayarampur
46. Madan Mondal	47	Khudiram	7	Dayarampur
47. Swapan Mondal	47	Khudiram	4	Dayarampur
48. Ranjan Mondal	44	Khudiram	4	Dayarampur
49. Susanta Mondal	47	Subal	5	Dayarampur
50. Rajit Mollah	55	Late Sultan	5	Dayarampur
51. Zabbar Shekh	52	Sultan Shekh	7	Dayarampur
52. Ajit Haldar	61	late Ramani	4	Dayarampur
53. Ranajit Haldar	50	Tarani Haldar	8	Dayarampur
54. Anchhad SK	55	Samser SK	5	Dayarampur
55. Tazimuddin	50	Samser SK	5	Dayarampur
56. Intaj SK	45	Samser SK	4	Dayarampur
57. Sahadul SK	40	Samser SK	5	Dayarampur
58. Bulu Shah	45	Maslem	2	Dayarampur
59. Abdus Samad Mollah	68	Late Panjaton	3	Dayarampur
60. Suman Mondal	32	Late Subal	4	Dayarampur
61. Subrata Mondal	38	Late Subal	3	Dayarampur
62. Mohabul Mondal	40	Lukman Mondal	5	Dayarampur
63. Subod Mondal	45	Nimai Mondal	5	Dayarampur
64. Hajrat Shekh	55	Late Haran Shekh	3	Dayarampur
65. Aslam Mondal,	42,	Lokman Mondal,	5,	Dayarampur
66. Ismail Mollah,	75,	Late Asalat Mollah,	3,	Dayarampur
67. Bajlur Rahaman,	47,	Ismail Mollah,	5,	Dayarampur
68. Fajlur Rahaman,	38,	Ismail Mollah,	5,	Dayarampur
69. Saidur Rahaman,	41,	Ismail Mollah,	3,	Dayarampur
70. Raghunath Pal,	49,	Late Narendranath Pal,	5,	Dayarampur
71. Anjali Mondal,	65,	Late Monoranjan Mondal,	5,	Dayarampur
72. Anarul Shah,	35,	Moslem Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
73. Nantu Shah,	35,	Moslem Shah,	3,	Dayarampur
74. Moslem Shah,	52,	Late Laskar,	3,	Dayarampur

75. Khalil Shah,	55,	Late Ukiluddin Shah,	3,	Dayarampur
76. Milan Shah,	28,	Khalil Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
77. Habibur Rahaman,	28,	Ismail Mollah,	4,	Dayarampur
78. Abul Kalam Shah,	55,	Kokiluddin Shah,	3,	Dayarampur
79. Monirujjaman Shah,	26,	Abul Kalam,	3,	Dayarampur
80. Harasit Haldar,	38,	Late Nimai Haldar,	4,	Dayarampur
81. Sahidul Shah,	32,	Late Abubakkar Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
82. Mohidul Shah,	30,	Late Abubakkar Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
83. Lalan Shah,	28,	Khalil Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
84. Milan Shah,	35,	Khalil Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
85. Asadul Shah,	32,	Samsul Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
86. Kuddus Shah,	35,	Samsul Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
87. Sontosh Haldar,	55,	Late Laxmi Haldar,	8,	Dayarampur
88. Pala Mondal,	33,	Nagendranath Mondal,	5,	Dayarampur
89. Rahaman Shah,	55,	Nirmal Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
90. Babu Shah,	30,	Rahaman,	4,	Dayarampur
91. Tanjila Bibi	25	Karim Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
92. Raichuddin Shah,	26,	Rahaman Shah,	3,	Dayarampur
93. Samad Shah,	45,	Karim Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
94. Sobha Sharma,	70,	Late Gopal,	7,	Dayarampur
95. Josna Santara,	85,	Late Murarimohan,	7,	Jalangi, Hoglar Dair
96. Abdul Rasid Shah,	36,	Samsul Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
97. Abdul Majid Shah,	60,	Late Kader Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
98. Kamrul Shah,	32,	Abdul Majid Shah,	3,	Dayarampur
99. Aru Shah,	34,	Abdul Majid Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
100. Nigar Hossian,	38,	Late Rasul Biswas,	5,	Dayarampur
101. Minnal Biswas,	34,	Mainuddin Biswas,	2,	Dayarampur
102. Hokman Ali Mondal,		Kasheruddin,	7,	Paraspar
103. Muslem Mondal,		Kasheruddin,	2,	Paraspar
104. Rashidul Mondal,		Muslem Mondal,	5,	Paraspar
105. Rizia Bewa,	55,	Late Samsuddin Mondal,	8,	Biswaspara
106. Hokman Mondal,	35,	Late Samsuddin Mondal,	5,	Biswaspara
107. Unus Ali Mondal,		Late Baduraddin Mondal,	4,	Biswaspara
108. Khiruddin Mondal,	60,	Late Baduraddin Mondal,	10,	Biswaspara
109. Abdul Mondal,	32,	Late Sumsuddin Mondal,	3,	Biswaspara
110. Rustum Mondal,	30,	Late Sumsuddin Mondal,	3,	Biswaspara
111. Khirul Mondal,	50,	Late Baduraddin Mondal,	5,	Biswaspara
112. Parvina Bibi,	25,	Nurul Mondal,	4,	Biswaspara
113. Akkash Sheke,	33,	Sattar,	6,	Dayarampur
114. Jalil Sheke,	30,	Sattar,	4,	Dayarampur
115. Miajan,		Late wife of Sattar,	2,	Dayarampur
116. Khalil Sheke,	28,	Sattar Sheke,	2,	Dayarampur
117. Piarul Sheke,	25,	Sattar Sheke,	2,	Dayarampur

118. Mukul Mondal,	25,	Lukman Mondal,	3,	Dayarampur
119. Lukman,	60,	Late Nurmohammad,	5,	Dayarampur
120. Jindar Mondal,	27,	Samir Mondal,	5,	Dayarampur
121. Joynal Mollah,	30,	Karim Mollah,	4,	Dayarampur
122. Manuara Bewa,	40,	Late wife of Lalchand Mondal,	4,	Dayarampur
123. Sapejan Bewa,	60,	Late wife of Bichhad Mondal,	2,	Dayarampur
124. Nantu Mondal,	25,	Late Bichhad,	2,	Dayarampur
125. Kamal Malitha,	25,	Late Mojir Malitha,	4,	Dayarampur
126. Jalam Malitha,	30,	Late Mojir Malitha,	4,	Dayarampur
127. Ulajan Bewa,	60,	Late wife of Mojir Malitha,	2,	Dayarampur
128. Arajul Sk,	70,	Late Sekendar,	7,	Dayarampur
129. Jahura Bewa,	60,	Nuru Sk,	3,	Dayarampur
[130-199 omitted]				
200. Saiful Mondal,	80,	Late Chamatkar Mondal,	8,	Dayarampur
201. Alamuddin,	50,	Late Imaj,	5,	Dayarampur
202. Rahat Mondal,	26,	Saiful,	2,	Dayarampur
203. Kochhimuddin Sk,	50,	Late Osman,	7,	Dayarampur
204. Jiten Mondal,	65,	Late Subol Mandal,	2,	Dayarampur
205. Shamol Mondal,	40,	Late Taroni Mondal,	6,	Dayarampur
206. Sankar Mondal,	30,	Gadai Mondal,	2,	Dayarampur
207. Raghunath Mondal,	42,	Late Satha Mondal,	4,	Dayarampur
208. Sapon Mondal,	45,	Late Bishtapad Mondal,	6,	Dayarampur
209. Nirpal Mondal,	38,	Tarani Mondal,	2,	Dayarampur
210. Ranjit Mondal,	55,	Tarani Mondal,	6,	Dayarampur
211. Bishwanath Mondal,	62,	Late Gokul Mondal,	5,	Dayarampur
212. Jamal Mollah,	40,	Late Chhamu Mollah,	3,	Dayarampur
213. Minarul Sk,	38,	Late Chhayer Sk,	5,	Dayarampur
214. Enarul Sk,	32,	Late Chhayer Sk,	2,	Dayarampur
215. Aslam Mondal,	40,	Late Lukman Mondal,	5,	Dayarampur
216. Alauddin Sk,	40,	Alimuddin Sk,	4,	Dayarampur
217. Jalaluddin Sk,	35,	Late Najimuddin Sk,	5,	Dayarampur
218. Mulluk Mondal,	45,	Late Alimuddin Mondal,	6,	Dayarampur
219. Najimuddin Sk,	72,	Late Osman Sk,	6,	Dayarampur
220. Rejabul Mondal,	30,	Lukman Mondal,	4,	Dayarampur
221. Jinnat Biswas,	45,	Late Bisat Biswas,	6,	Dayarampur
222. Fajal Mondal,	55,	Late Badal Mondal,	6,	Dayarampur
223. Rahman Biswas,	56,	Late Bilat Biswas,	4,	Dayarampur
224. Shibnath Pramanik,	52,	Late Jagindranath Pramanik,	6,	Dayarampur
225. Dijen Pramanik,	60,	Late Jagindranath Pramanik,	5,	Dayarampur
226. Dilip Pramanik,	30,	Dijen Pramanik,	4,	Dayarampur
227. Rampad Pramanik,	55,	Late Kalipada Pramanik,	4,	Dayarampur
228. Ramesh Pramanik,	22,	Rampada Pramanik,	3,	Dayarampur
229. Jatin Sarkar,	42,	Late Judhithir Sarkar,	5,	Dayarampur

230. Jagannath Sarkar,	32,	Late Judhithir Sarkar,	4,	Dayarampur
231. Amulya Pramanik,	50,	Late Balaram Pramanik,	5,	Dayarampur
232. Bipad Bhanjan Pramanik,	37,	Late Balaram Pramanik,	4,	Dayarampur
233. Ajit Halder,	60,	Late Ramani Halder,	4,	Dayarampur
234. Julfikar Shah,	28,	Abdul Ajit Shah,	3,	Dayarampur
235. Najmul Shah,	37,	Late Ummat Shah,	2,	Dayarampur
236. Hajrat Mollah,	60,	Late Haran Mollah,	3,	Dayarampur
237. Firoj Shah,	32,	Abdul Bari Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
238. Sanjit Mondal,	33,	Kalachad Mondal,	4,	Dayarampur
239. Bablu Mondal,	35,	Kalachad Mondal,	4,	Dayarampur
240. Ranjit Mondal,	36,	Kalachad Mondal,	4,	Dayarampur
241. Akhil Mondal,	25,	Kalachad Mondal,	2,	Dayarampur
242. Nikhil Mondal,	28,	Kalachad Mondal,	4,	Dayarampur
243. Sonath Sarkar,	42,	Sada Krista Sarkar,	3,	Dayarampur
244. Billal Mollah,	42,	Karim Mollah,	4,	Dayarampur
245. Afijan Bewa,	75,		4,	Dayarampur
246. Bilas Biswas,	32,	Ajit Biswas,	3,	Dayarampur
247. Tari Halder,	70,	Tarani Halder	2,	Paraspur
248. Ansar Ali Shah,	65,	Kader Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
249. Rina Bewa,	32,	Giash Shah	4,	Dayarampur
250. Soriful Shah,	40,	Late Aijuddin Shah,	4,	Dayarampur
251. Saiful Shah,	35,	Late Aijuddin Shah,	3,	Dayarampur
252. Sabiron,	60,	Wife of Late Aijuddin Shah,	3,	Dayarampur
253. Anarul Shaw,	41,	Ummat Ali Shaw,	5,	Paraspur
254. Najbul Shaw,	35,	Ummat Ali Shaw,	2,	Paraspur
255. Ummat Ali Shaw,	75,	Late Jonab Shaw,	2,	Paraspur
256. Saiful Shaw,	41,	Panjhatan Shaw,	5,	Paraspur
257. Panjhatan Shaw,	85,	Late Jonab Shaw,	2,	Paraspur
258. Sobejan Bewa,	70,	Wife of late Jonab Shaw,	1,	Paraspur
259. Jiarul Shaw,	36,	Soleman Shaw,	3,	Paraspur
260. Alior Shaw,	45,	Late Nilmon Shaw,	5,	Paraspur
261. Najir Shaw,	42,	Late Nilmon Shaw,	4,	Paraspur
262. Ujir Shaw,	40,	Late Nilmon Shaw,	5,	Paraspur
263. Babu Shaw,	38,	Late Nilmon Shaw,	4,	Paraspur
264. Mahasin Shaw,	55,	Late Patan Shaw,	5,	Paraspur
265. Nojrul Shaw,	32,	Mahasin Shaw,	5,	Paraspur
266. Ahachand Shaw,	60,	Late Patan Shaw,	2,	Dayarampur
267. Monirul Shaw,	35,	Ahachand Shaw,	4,	Dayarampur
268. Anarul Shaw,	40,	Ahachand Shaw,	3,	Dayarampur
269. Rahim Shaw,	75,	Biru Shaw,	4,	Dayarampur
270. Sofikul Shaw,	40,	Rahim Shaw,	5,	Dayarampur
271. Rafikul Shaw,	35,	Rahim Shaw,	5,	Dayarampur
272. Rij Shaw,	75,	Late Piarul Shaw,	2,	Dayarampur

273. Bejabul Shaw,	40,	Riaj Shaw,	4,	Dayarampur
274. Asraf Shaw,	35,	Riaj Shaw,	3,	Dayarampur
275. Asad Shek	40,		5,	Dayarampur
276. Rahaman Malitha,	65,	Late Yasin Malitha,	2,	Dayarampur
277. Jamed Malitha,	40,	Rahaman Malitha,	4,	Dayarampur
278. Hamed Malitha,	45,	Rahaman Malitha,	5,	Dayarampur
279. Nuju Ali	42,	Ahad Ali	4,	Dayarampur
280. Ismail Shaw,	40,	Sultan Shaw;	5,	Dayarampur
281. Moslem Shaw,	35,	Sultan Shaw,	2,	Dayarampur
282. Jamal Shaw,	32,	Sultan Shaw,	4,	Dayarampur
283. Sabdul Mondal,	38,	Naimuddin Mondal,	5,	Dayarampur
284. Kanti Mondal,	60,	Late Abhimanya Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
285. Basanta Mondal,	30,	Kanti Mondal,	4,	Paraspur
286. Gopal Mondal,	30,	Ajit Mondal,	2,	Paraspur
287. Meghnath Mondal,	25,	Ajit Mondal,	2,	Paraspur
288. Jabbar Mondal,	30,	Akchad Mondal,	4,	Paraspur
289. Babu Mondal,	25,	Dhiren Mondal,	4,	Paraspur
290. Nirapad Mondal,	70,	Late Abhimanya Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
291. Mohand Mondal,	32,	Nirapad Mondal,	4,	Paraspur
292. Dhiren Mondal,	50,	Late Mohan Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
293. Kumor Mondal,	45,	Late Mohan Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
294. Sonai Mondal,	35,	Late Mohan Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
295. Sukumar Mondal,	40,	Late Mohan Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
296. Rajkumar Mondal,	30,	Late Mohan Mondal,	4,	Paraspur
297. Krishna Mondal,	20,	Dhiren Mondal,	2,	Paraspur
298. Shamal Biswas,	35,	Amullya Biswas,	5,	Paraspur
299. Gangapad Mondal,	50,	Late Pad Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
300. Nujbur Mollah,	40,	Late Hujur Mollah,	4,	Paraspur
301. Arun Mondal,	45,	Late Pad Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
302. Sunil Pramanik,	55,	Late Goshai Pramanik,	3,	Paraspur
303. Niranjan Mondal,	45,	Late Sushil Mondal,	3,	Paraspur
304. Nogen Mondal,	45,	Late Raju Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
305. Niranjan Mondal,	40,	Late Shamapada Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
306. Montu Mondal,	45,	Late Bistapad Mondal,	7,	Paraspur
307. Lalu Mondal,	35,	Late Ekchhad Mondal,	4,	Paraspur
308. Rupjan Bewa,	50,	Late Karim Mondal,	1,	Paraspur
309. Nikhil Mondal,	35,	Gopal Mondal,	3,	Paraspur
310. Sohidul Mondal,	45,	Late Khairulla Mondal,	4,	Paraspur
311. Amal Mondal,	33,	Nanda Mondal,	3,	Paraspur
312. Tanjil Mondal,	35,	Late Asraf Mondal,	6,	Paraspur
313. Ajed Mondal,	33,	Late Asraf Mondal,	4,	Paraspur
314. Mujammel Mondal,	40,	Late Asraf Mondal,	6,	Paraspur
315. Indadul Mondal,	30,	Late Asraf Mondal,	4,	Paraspur



316. Kibriya Mondal,	27,	Late Asraf Mondal,	2,	Paraspur
317. Jusna Bewa,	36,	Late Khairulla Mondal,	1,	Paraspur
318. Belunor Bewa,	30,	Late Khairulla Mondal,	2,	Paraspur
319. Somvu Mondal,	30,	Fotik Mondal,	3,	Paraspur
320. Sunil Mondal,	40,	Fotik Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
321. Sukumar Mondal,	36,	Fotik Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
322. Ujjal Mondal,	32,	Fotik Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
323. Anil Mondal,	35,	Moni Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
324. Rojabala,	65,	Late Gakul Mondal,	1,	Paraspur
325. Nirmal Pramanik,	38,	Late Gosai Pramanik,	4,	Paraspur
326. Bipad Pramanik,	35,	Late Gosai Pramanik,	4,	Paraspur
327. Nipen Mondal,	40,	Late Nibaroon Mondal,	6,	Paraspur
328. Jiarul Mondal,	35,	Late Ajjul Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
329. Kulchhan Bewa,	45,	Late Ajjul Mondal,	3,	Paraspur
330. Krisna Sardar,	30,	Bablu Sardar,	3,	Paraspur
331. Uttam Sardar,	35,	Nepal Sardar,	2,	Paraspur
332. Madhab Sardar,	30,	Biren Sardar,	3,	Paraspur
333. Pratima Sardar,	33,	Wife of Mahadeb Sardar,	5,	Paraspur
334. Jadab Sardar,	27,	Biren Sardar,	2,	Paraspur
335. Bhabesh Mondal,	65,	Late Ramkrisna Mondal,	1,	Paraspur
336. Fokir Mondal,	50,	Late Abbas Mondal,	7,	Paraspur
337. Billal Mondal,	30,	Fokir Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
338. Jamsed Mondal,	42,	Ismail Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
339. Ajahar Mondal,	51,	Late Gofur Mondal,	7,	Paraspur
340. Konu Bewa,	25,	Late Bulu,	3,	Paraspur
341. Kabil Mondal,	46,	Gofur Mondal,	6,	Paraspur
342. Giyas Sarkar,	27,	Elahi Sarkar,	3,	Paraspur
343. Kushi Mondal,	30,	Sadananda Mondal,	2,	Paraspur
344. Gour Mondal,	45,	Kedar Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
345. Bhanu Mondal,	35,	Helal Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
346. Sasti Mondal,	40,	Late Abhimanya Mondal,	2,	Paraspur
347. Sukchad Mondal,	75,	Late Tafel Mondal,	5,	Paraspur
348. Rafikul Mondal,	30,	Sukchad Mondal,	3,	Paraspur
349. Biyakul Mondal,	27,	Sukchad Mondal,	3,	Paraspur
350. Sofikul Mondal,	24,	Sukchad Mondal,	3,	Paraspur
351. Bijoy Mondal,	26,	Nipen Mondal,	2,	Paraspur
352. Hokman Ali,	45,	Setab Mollah,	6,	Raypara
353. Arman Mollah,	43,	Setab Mollah,	5,	Raypara
354. Sabbir Khan,	28,	Tochhlimuddin Khan,	4,	Raypara
355. Tochhlimuddin,	50,	Late Miyajan Khan,	6,	Raypara
356. Mojibor Khan,	32,	Tochhlimuddin Khan,	5,	Raypara
357. Jomiruddin Sarkar,	33,	Raijuddin Sarkar,	4,	Raypara
358. Anechha Bewa,	62,	Late wife Somser Mondal,	2,	Raypara

359. Ejabul Khan,	28,	Tochhlimuddin Sarkar,	4,	Raypara
360. Achheya Bewa,	60,	Late wife Setar Mondal,	3,	Raypara
361. Joyenuddin Sarkar,	42,	Rayejuddin Sarkar,	6,	Raypara
362. Asrafal Sk,	32,	Samser Sk,	6,	Raypara
363. Abdul Bari Mondal,	47,	Janmahammad Mondal,	7,	Raypara
364. Habil Mondal,	55,	Late Abdul Mondal,	6,	Raypara
365. Bablu Mondal,	34,	Mohiruddin Mondal,	5,	Raypara
366. Nasiruddin Mondal,	32,	Rosik Mondal,	6,	Raypara
367. Pravas Chandra Roy,	65,	Late Brajoballat Roy,	3,	Raypara
368. Amiya Bala Roy,	58,	Late wife of Sri Santa Roy,	2,	Raypara
371. Barkat Sk,	62,	Ahammod Mondal,	7,	Raypara
372. Manoyara Bewa,	55,	Late wife of Barkat Sk,	2,	Raypara
373. Samiruddin Sk,	45,	Late Tachen Sk,	8,	Raypara
374. Jibona Bewa,			2,	Raypara
375. Josim Mollah,	65,	Late Ahmed Mollah,	7,	Raypara
376. Abdul Mojit Sk,	52,	Late Ajit Sk,	5,	Raypara
377. Rabkul Mondal,	38,	Late Barkat Mondal,	5,	Raypara
378. Moniruddin Mondal,	62,	Late Mahammad Mondal,	4,	Raypara
379. Rokena Bewa,	55,	Late wife of Bichhad Mondal,	2,	Raypara
380. Rojiron Bewa,	62,	Late wife of Rosik Mondal,	2,	Raypara
381. Lotifon Bewa,	60,	Late wife of Royej Sarkar,	2,	Raypara
382. Khalekur Rahaman,	55,	Late Alimuddin Modal	5,	Uttar Ghoshpara
383. Moksed Ali,	54,	Late Abusofiyann Mondal,	4,	Uttar Ghoshpara
384. Khemojan Bewa,	93,	Late Lojer Mollah,	1,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
385. Hajrat Ali,	50,	Late Hujur Ali,	5,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
386. Sohikul Ali,	47,	Late Chhaber Mondal,	5,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
387. Soiruddin Mondal,	42,	Late Chhaber Mondal,	4,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
388. Akchhar Ali,	47,	Late Kismat Mondal,	5,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
389. Saidar Ali,	50,	Late Kismat Mondal,	6,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
390. Nujera Bewa,	38,	Late Nekchhar Ali	6,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
391. Abdul Kuddus Mondal,	38,	Late Ohab Mondal,	5,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
392. Aklema Bewa,	60,	Late Kasem Mondal,	1,	Ghospara Sarbopalli
393. Rahim Sarkar,	65,	Late Moyej Sarkar,	2,	Roypara
394. Fojlul Sarkar,	47,	Rahim Sarkar,	6,	Roypara
395. Amir Sk,	52,	Mohommad Sk,	5,	Roypara
396. Belsad Mondal,	48,	Late Riyaj Mondal,	5,	Roypara
397. Madhai Chaudhuri,	63,	Late Khokaram,	6,	Roypara
398. Sukhen Mondal,	32,	Late Nagen Mondal,	4,	Dayarampur
399. Palash Mondal,	34,	Late Nagen Mondal,	3,	Dayarampur
400. Ajj Shah,	52,	Late Kader Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
401. Kajim Shah,	45,	Late Korim Shah,	5,	Dayarampur
402. Jochhim Mollah,	73,	Late Ased Mollah,	3,	Dayarampur

403. Aklima,	46,	Jochhim Mollah,	1,	Dayarampur
404. Brindaban Karmakar,	36,	Suren Karmakar,	3,	Dayarampur
405. Jyoti Ranjan Haldar,	38,	Manmatha Haldar,	5,	Dayarampur
406. Gurupada Haldar,	42,	Late Kalipada Haldar,	6,	Dayarampur
407. Ektar Mondal,	32,	Late Anchhar Mondal,	5,	Roypara
408. Ramela Bewa,	55,	Late Pachu Sk,	7,	Biswaspara
409. Mahadeb Santara,	48,	Late Murari Moham,	7,	Hoglar Dair
410. Joydeb Santara,	62,	Late Murari Moham,	5,	Hoglar Dair
411. Purnima Santara,	45,	Late Murari Moham,	2,	Hoglar Dair
412. Chhader Sk,	60,	Late Achher Sk,	4,	Paraspur
413. Mijannur Sk,	36,	Chhader Sk,	4,	Paraspur
414. Khairulla Sk,	42,	Chhader Sk,	5,	Paraspur
415. Amena Bewa,	40,	Late Ead Ali,	4,	Sitanagar
416. Molajan Bewa,	30,	Late Rohim Mondal,	5,	Sitanagar
417. Murshida,	25,	Jahan,	3,	Sitanagar
418. Joinab Bewa,	45,	Late wife of Hossain,	4,	Sitanagar
419. Memjan Bewa,	50,	Late wife of Amiruddin,	7,	Sitanagar
420. Achhiya Bewa,	30,	Late Rakim,	4,	Sitanagar
421. Ajifa Bewa,	28,	Late Alkar,	4,	Sitanagar
422. Taramon Bewa,	32,	Late Chhabed,	6,	Sitanagar
423. Momata Bewa,	25,	Late Nobi,	4,	Sitanagar
424. Raijan Bewa,	42,	Late Ejabuddin,	4,	Sitanagar
425. Mohila Bewa,	27,	Sohar Ali,	3,	Sitanagar
426. Jahanara Bewa,	25,	Kajim,	3,	Sitanagar
427. Anjera Bewa,	27,	Late Aksed,	3,	Sitanagar
428. Enjila Bewa,	25,	Late Jamsed,	4,	Sitanagar
429. Menyara Bewa,	37,	Late Haidar,	6,	Sitanagar
430. Mojiron Bewa,	30,	Late Maharuddin,	4,	Sitanagar
431. Momata Bewa,	32,	Late Panjaton,	5,	Sitanagar
432. Sahajan Bewa,	26,	Late Ajijul,	3,	Sitanagar
433. Bhanu Bewa,	25,	Late Mechher Sk,	3,	Sitanagar
434. Malaton Bewa,	27,	Late Aminul Hoque,	4,	Sitanagar
435. Rahima Bewa,	40,	Late Mokabbar,	5,	Sitanagar
436. Moriom Bewa,	27,	Late Anisur Sk,	3,	Sitanagar
437. Habib Mondal,	39,	Ichharuddin Mondal,	6,	Dayarampur
438. Gopen Sharma,	45,	Late Gopal Sharma,	3,	Dayarampur
439. Nirmal Santary	39,	Late Murari,	5,	Hoglar Dair
440. Sankar Haldar,		Late Anil,	5,	Dayarampur
441. Manotosh Haldar,		Madhai,	3,	Dayarampur
442. Suvajit Sharma,		Late Sujit Bhaskar,	1,	Dayarampur
443. Uttam Sharma,		Upen,	3,	Dayarampur
444. Sadhan Sharma,		Satyendra Nath,	4,	Dayarampur
445. Pranathan Prasanta,			4,	Dayarampur

446. Muktar Mondal,	Jubbar	5,	Paraspur
447. Sanat Haldar,	Late Panchanan,	6,	Dayarampur
448. Manendra Nath Sharma,	Late Shibnath,	2,	Dayarampur
449. Anil Haldar,	Late Ratan,	6,	Dayarampur
450. Madan Haldar,	Late Balai,	5,	Dayarampur
451. Mohan Haldar,	Late Balai,	5,	Dayarampur
452. Prafulla Haldar,	Sripada,	5,	Dayarampur
453. Mohanta Mondal,	Nirapada,	4,	Paraspur
454. Madhai Chowdhury,	Late Khokaram,	3,	Dayarampur
455. Mahadeb Chowdhury,	Madhai,	5,	Dayarampur

*Nowadays most of the people of West Bengal are fully aware of the erosional activity of the river Padma which has been eroding away acre after acres of agricultural land along its banks in the Jalangi Block of Mursbidabad. Here are the details of some of the mouzas (demarcation of land) of Ghoshpara Gram Panchayet, under Jalangi Block which were existed but now some of them are fully washed away and some of them are about to be disappeared within couples of months.*

*Name of the Mouzas*

*Present status*

1. Paraspur - JL No. - 15	completely washed away
2. Paraspur - JL No. - 15 / 149	completely washed away
3. Udaynagar Khand - 1	completely washed away
4. Udaynagar Khand - 2	partially existed
5. Muradpur - 1	partially existed
6. Muradpur - 2 Jalangi	partially existed
7. Muradpur - Jalangi - 1 A	partially existed
8. Muradpur dear - 1	partially existed
9. Muradpur dear - 2	partially existed
10. Chakbbhadra - 1	partially existed
11. Chakbbhadra - 2	partially existed
12. Chakbbhadra - 3	partially existed
13. West Udaynagar	completely washed away
14. Godagari - 1 - JL - 14/48	completely washed away
15. Godagari dear - 2 - JL 14/48	completely washed away
16. Godagari - 3 JL - 14	completely washed away
17. Dayarampur - JL - 16	partially existed

**INDIA: Culture of accountability necessary in addressing  
hunger and starvation deaths in West Bengal**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

AS-122-2005

November 30, 2005

**A Statement by the Asian Human Rights Commission  
(AHRC)**

**INDIA: Culture of accountability necessary in addressing  
hunger and starvation deaths in West Bengal**

The starvation deaths and malnutrition affecting thousands of villagers residing on the banks of the Padma River in Jalangi, Murshidabad has for the first time been accepted by the local administration. The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) welcomes the admission by Superintendent of Police, Murshidabad, Mr Neeraj Kumar Singh, that at least 300 of the villagers he interviewed from Dayarampur, Parashpur and Toltoli were malnourished and without food. He additionally concluded that ten deaths previously certified as non hunger related deaths must be recognized as deaths due to starvation. These comments were made in a report received last week by several senior government officials, including the Home Secretary and Chief Minister of West Bengal and constitute a significant step towards addressing the region's food security problems, particularly after over ten years of consistent denial by state authorities that hunger is even a concern in the area. By following up on these comments, a culture of accountability can be created.

The AHRC has reported numerous hunger and starvation cases in West Bengal and other parts of India over the past year, many having arisen from state neglect and inaction. In September 2005, the names of over 500 villagers were approved and posted in public distribution shops throughout Jalangi, promising food rations to

those in need. Since then however, a further three villagers have starved to death after receiving no food from the shop dealers, many of whom sell food rations on the black market. To date, the police have not pressed criminal charges against these ration dealers, or others who have warned the villagers to remain silent about their grievances. Moreover, none of the persons who have lost their livelihoods from the river erosion have been placed under Murshidabad's existing food for work programme.

The hunger present in Howrah, West Bengal where families evicted from their homes in Bellilious Park now struggle to provide for their livelihoods, speaks to sheer government neglect as children and their parents continue to starve. Despite several submissions and organized protests appealing for government help, and even guarantees by some officials that aid is on the way, assistance is yet to be provided to these families.

Government neglect and denial has been a long tradition in India, particularly concerning the situation of marginalized and vulnerable groups. While Superintendent Singh's report may only admit to a small part of the hunger and starvation problems in Murshidabad, it is an important and commendable first step in addressing the victims' concerns. These concerns include a working public distribution system and food for work programme, quality medical facilities, particularly for those suffering from night blindness and other hunger related illnesses, and educational centers for children. The AHRC hopes that the Superintendent's comments will lead the authorities responsible for providing food and health assistance—at the local and state levels—to take immediate action.

Civil society in West Bengal can also make use of the admission of hunger in urging the local administration to act in accordance with India's constitution to protect, respect and fulfill the right to food. In this way, West Bengal, as well as the rest of the country, can create a culture of accountability for hunger and starvation deaths, as opposed to the one of denial that has existed until today.



The Padma, continuously eroding the banks



Nowhere to go



Shyamali Haldar, who could not save her daughter from starvation



Whether the new settlement of the homeless could be saved from the wrath of angry river ?





Interaction with starved victims at Udaynarayanpur



Jahanara Bewa lost her husband & mother



Before me Notary Public at Howrah  
Affidavit

I, Alauddin Sheikh son of Alimuddin Sheikh of village Sayarampur,  
P.O. Korastapur, P.S. Jalangi Dist: Murshidabad aged about 32 years  
by birth Muslim by occupation labourer do hereby solemnly declare to  
state as follows:-

1. That I am daily labourer and employed in our village and  
I do not get job regularly. If I get job, I earn wages at the  
rate of Rs. 10/- only on daily basis. I am married and I have a  
son and a daughter.

2. As my parents were dependants on me. I have been facing  
extreme poverty due to my unemployment. I failed to provide  
parents food and amenities.

3. My father, Alimuddin Sheikh died on 7th Falgun 1410 B.S.  
and my mother, Jaheda Bibi died on 14th Falgun 14 B.S. They  
died due to things as I could not provide them food stuffs  
and I had no economic resources.

4. At present, I have been passing critical financial crisis,  
I have no B.P.L. card, I have not received any government  
aid till now only one year back due to erosion of river bank,  
I received 6 kgs of wheat and one Tonpauli.  
The statements made above are true to my knowledge and belief  
and I swear this affidavit on the day of 14th 14th  
at Howrah.

DEPARTMENT OF ADVOCATE  
GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL  
NOTARY PUBLIC

DEBARBATA CHAKRABORTY  
NOTARY AT HOWRAH  
GOVT. OF WEST BENGAL  
23 MAR 2005  
Floor Judges Court  
W. B. 101



Signature of Alauddin Sheikh  
Deponent's name to me  
Date of the affidavit  
and my presence  
Kalyan  
Advocate

Affidavit of Alauddin Sheikh, whose father, Alimuddin Sheikh & mother Jaheda Bibi died of starvation

**INDIA: Children suffer from empty rhetoric and ineffective schemes in India**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 18, 2005

AS-117-2005

**A Statement by the Asian Human Rights Commission  
(AHRC)**

**Children suffer from empty rhetoric and ineffective schemes in India**

More than a decade after India's ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children throughout the country continue to suffer from hunger, disease, exploitation and discrimination.

At present, several hundred children suffer from night blindness in Murshidabad district, Jalangi, West Bengal. Having lost their land due to erosion caused by the Padma river, parents can barely provide their children with enough food to satisfy their hunger, let alone food to meet their nutritional requirements. The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has issued numerous statements and hunger alerts regarding the desperate situation of the villagers there, as well as the inaction and neglect of local authorities.

Of the thousands evicted from Belillious Park, Howrah, West Bengal, a significant number were children. Many of them have now died from starvation and hunger related illnesses. Five-year-old E M Lachmi died on March 11, 2005. Two of her brothers also died after the eviction: three-year-old E M Shiva died in December 2003 and eight-month-old Taklu died in 2004. Their mother, E M Parvati was unable to feed them after losing her home and job in February 2003, when the eviction took place. Until today, there has been no effective government response to the plight of the Belillious Park residents. Far from providing them with adequate alternative housing and compensation, the government has not even included

them in food assistance schemes. Until their basic needs of hunger and shelter are met, these children cannot enjoy any other rights, including that of education.

Similar situations are faced in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Parents from the Mushahar community in Belwa village cannot feed their children even once a day. These children fall asleep at night after crying themselves to exhaustion. When they cannot sleep due to hunger, their parents are sometimes forced to hit them, in the hope that the added exhaustion will bring about sleep.

While India's Supreme Court in a landmark judgment stated that article 21 of the Indian constitution refers to the right to a life with dignity rather than a mere right of survival, this has no meaning for the ordinary child who faces hunger and destitution. In fact, these children are being denied even the right to survival by the same authorities that are obliged to uphold the decisions made by the country's highest court. These authorities further ignore or manipulate the various schemes introduced to address child welfare as well as other issues of social concern. In fact, the central and the state governments compete with each other to draft such schemes. Politicians and bureaucrats play their role in advocating certain schemes, without taking any practical steps to implement them. The Integrated Child Development Service Programme, the Anthyodaya and Annapoorna are but a few assistance schemes for those in dire need. However, the distribution of food and assistance through these programmes is such that beneficiaries are forced to buy food from the public distribution shops paying equal if not higher prices as those in the market. In order to pay these prices, many children are forced into labor or trafficking. Granite quarries in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are worked by such children, while elsewhere in the country children end up as domestic servants, denied their rights to education, health and dignity.

President A P J Kalam last year mentioned that India's children should be proud to see an Indian astronaut landing on the moon in the near future. His remark may not have much effect on the large numbers of children throughout the country who are forced to

sleep under the moon every night, with no roof over their heads.

It is time for India to seriously implement its various legislation, court judgments and state schemes regarding the rights of children. It is time to move away from empty political rhetoric towards genuine human commitment. On the occasion of this year's International Day for Children, November 20, 2005, the AHRC urges the Indian government to respect and fulfill its obligations not only under the CRC, but also under its own constitution and other domestic legislation. A start would be to intervene in the above mentioned cases of hunger and starvation. Providing vitamins to children in Jalangi will ensure they do not suffer from permanently impaired vision, while quality food assistance through an effective public distribution system will prevent other E M Parvatis from losing their children to hunger. These measures will be of much more radical consequence than the usual speeches and gatherings that occur to mark this day.

[Hunger Alert] UPDATE (India): Government action inadequate in providing rehabilitation to displaced hunger victims and continued starvation death in Murshidabad, West Bengal

UPDATE ON HUNGER ALERT UPDATE ON  
HUNGER ALERT UPDATE ON HUNGER ALERT  
UPDATE ON HUNGER ALERT UPDATE ON HUNGER  
ALERT

ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - URGENT  
APPEALS PROGRAM

Update on Hunger Alert

11 November 2005

[Re: HU-07-2005: Starvation deaths continue despite government's commitment to provide food assistance in West Bengal; UA-161-2005: INDIA: Human rights defender physically assaulted, threatened and detained by government officials; HU-04-2005: INDIA: UNICEF still avoiding responsibility in providing assistance to starving women and children in West Bengal; UA-59-2005: INDIA: Police attack on human rights defender and his family in Murshidabad, West Bengal; HA-02-2005: INDIA: Starvation deaths occurring in Murshidabad district, West Bengal]

HU-09-2005: UPDATE (India): Government action inadequate in providing rehabilitation to displaced hunger victims and continued starvation death in Murshidabad, West Bengal

INDIA: Hunger and starvation; inadequate government action; right to life

Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has received updated information from Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha

(Masum) regarding recent plans proposed by the government to address the terrible living conditions in Jalangi, Murshidabad, West Bengal. The plans to relocate displaced villagers from several villages in Jalangi however do not provide any permanent solutions to their concerns. Additionally, the AHRC was also informed that another starvation death has occurred. Thus, even though names had been submitted to Public Distribution Shops, to date no one has been provided with food assistance.

The AHRC asks you to contact the Chief Minister of West Bengal and all other relevant authorities urging them to immediately intervene in the hunger situation in Jalangi and remedy the systemic failures in the Public Distribution System. Furthermore, please call on the local authorities to propose a feasible rehabilitation programme for the victims.

**Urgent Appeals Desk - Hunger Alert**  
**Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)**

#### **UPDATE INFORMATION:**

In late October, it was reported to the AHRC that the block administration of Murshidabad had proposed a rehabilitation programme for displaced hunger victims from the Dayarampur, Parashpur and Taltali villages who currently have no land or means to provide for their livelihoods due to the Padma River erosion. In the middle of the Padma River lies an island, a piece of land made by the river itself many years ago, that was given to landless tillers in 1974 by the governor of West Bengal under the West Bengal Land Reform Act 1955. The government has now proposed that the displaced villagers from Jalangi be relocated to this piece of land.

Several problems exist in this plan and point to why it is an ineffective remedy to the situation in Jalangi. First, because the land was originally given to landless tillers, they are the ones who have legal claim to it and therefore it cannot be used for rehabilitation purposes. Also, the land itself is not fit for residential

use, as water, sanitation, electricity and communication systems are all lacking. Finally, taking into consideration the rapid and swift changes occurring along the banks of the Padma River, the land may also in time be susceptible to erosion and this proposal does not address the continuous loss of land existing in the area.

The local administration is reported to have already started moving victims to the deposited land. Currently, displaced villagers from the Udaynagar and Suryanagar colonies are forcibly being taken to land by the district administration, with the help of the police.

Meanwhile, the Public Distribution System (PDS) is still failing to provide assistance to the hunger victims in Jalangi. The 500-plus villagers, whose names had been placed in ration shops in September 2005, have not been receiving food assistance. The lists were also distributed to the District Magistrate Office and Block Development Office and upon investigation all the victims mentioned were found to be genuinely suffering from starvation and malnutrition. However, ration shop dealers have not been distributing food on claims that they have not received a government order to do so. When questioned on the current status of food assistance to the victims, Mr. Gulam Ali Ansari, Additional District Magistrate (General) of Murshidabad responded that he had to enquire further about the matter.

Tragically, as a result of the government dragging its feet, on October 29, 2005, another man who was listed under the PDS list died of starvation and hunger related illnesses. Ummat Ali Shah did not receive any food assistance before he died

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For over 10 years, the Padma River has been eroding. Many homes and livelihoods have disappeared because of the swelling river, and the result has been the starvation of villagers in Jalangi. In recent years, the erosion has worsened and the hunger situation has grown significantly.

Several hunger deaths have been reported in the area. Please see



HA-02-2005 for more details pertaining on the persisting hunger crisis. Moreover, there have now been questions on more than one occasion regarding the government's lack of sufficient and appropriate action in trying to address the victims' hunger and land needs. Please see HU-07-2005 for details.

### SUGGESTED ACTION:

Please write a letter to the Chief Minister of West Bengal and other related officials, urging them to investigate the situation. First, the local administration must be condemned for its poor excuse of a rehabilitation programme and urged to seriously and appropriately address and rectify all the problems the victims are suffering. Furthermore, please request that appropriate measures be taken to ensure that the Public Distribution System in the state provides sufficient and nutritious food assistance to its beneficiaries. The PDS must also be monitored to ensure it works properly, where by being placed under welfare schemes guarantees that quality food assistance is provided. A sample letter is provided below.

### SAMPLE LETTER:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

RE: INDIA: Government action inadequate in providing rehabilitation to displaced hunger victims in Murshidabad, West Bengal

I was recently updated as to the current situation of hunger in Jalangi, Murshidabad and am deeply concerned that the local administration has not actively taken steps to address it.

I was informed that a rehabilitation programme has been put in place to move displaced villagers from Jalangi to a piece of land that lies in the middle of the Padma River. However, I was shocked to learn that this piece of land was already given to landless tillers

in 1974 by the governor of West Bengal under the West Bengal Land Reform Act 1955. Furthermore, it is my understanding that no amenities exist on the island as it lacks water, electricity, sanitation and communication systems. Finally, given the nature of the river erosion, the land may also be susceptible to erosion. Thus, this rehabilitation plan is not sufficient in providing an effective and long-term solution to the problem.

It was also brought to my attention that the Public Distribution System (PDS) is still failing to provide assistance to the hunger victims in Jalangi, who are severely malnourished due to losing their land and livelihoods. Over 500 villagers, whose names had been placed in ration shops in September 2005, have still not received any food assistance. The lists were also distributed to the District Magistrate Office and Block Development Office and all the victims mentioned were found to be genuinely suffering from starvation and malnutrition. However, ration shop dealers have not been distributing food on claims that they have not received a government order to do so. When questioned on the current status of food assistance to the victims, Mr. Gulam Ali Ansari, Additional District Magistrate (General) of Murshidabad responded that he had to enquire further about the matter.

I am also extremely distressed to learn that while the government authorities have been inert, another villager, Ummat Ali Shah, is reported to have died of starvation on October 29, 2005. Mr Shah, whose name was also listed under the PDS, did not receive any food rations before he died.

Given the severity of hunger and the rapid erosion of land, the government must take immediate and appropriate steps to address the situation. The problems in Jalangi are many, and a genuine rehabilitation programme that aims to help rebuild the victims' lives must include regular and sufficient food assistance, permanent land with amenities for the villagers to reside and farm on, access

to healthcare and education facilities, as well as a plan to stop the river erosion and reduce the amount of land being lost each year. If the government continues to fail in this respect, the starvation deaths will increase rapidly.

I strongly urge you to investigate this situation immediately and take necessary action to address the problems in Jalangi. Please ensure that the Public Distribution System in the state provides sufficient and nutritious food assistance to its beneficiaries. Please also monitor the PDS to ensure it works properly, where by being placed under welfare schemes guarantees that quality food assistance is provided. Finally, the proposed plan by the district administration in no way provides rehabilitation and I urge you to seriously and appropriately address and rectify the problems the victims are suffering.

Sincerely,

PLEASE SEND LETTERS TO:

1. Mr. Manjunath Prasad  
District Magistrate - Murshidabad  
Murshidabad  
West Bengal  
INDIA  
Tel: +91 34 8225 1650  
Fax: +91 34 8225 0145

2. Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee  
Chief Minister/ Minister of Home Department  
Government of West Bengal  
Writer's Building  
Kolkata - 700 001  
West Bengal  
INDIA  
Tel: +91 33 2221 5555 (Office), 2334 4700/ 2358 1166 (Home)  
Fax: +91 33 2214 5480/ 2214 1341  
E-mail: [cm@wb.gov.in](mailto:cm@wb.gov.in)

PLEASE SEND COPIES TO :

1. Mr. Biswanath Choudhury  
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Fax: +91 33 2214 5452

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2. Mr. Amit Kiran Deb  
Chief Secretary  
Government of West Bengal  
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Tel: +91 33 2214 5858

Fax: +91 33 2214 4328

E-mail: [chiefsec@wb.gov.in](mailto:chiefsec@wb.gov.in)

3. Mr. Narendranath Dey  
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Government of West Bengal  
Writers Buildings  
Kolkata - 700001  
West Bengal

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Tel: +91 33 2252 1388/ 6434

Fax: +91 33 22522628

E-mail: [micfoodsupplies@wb.gov.in](mailto:micfoodsupplies@wb.gov.in)

4. Justice Shyamal Kumar Sen  
Chairperson  
West Bengal Human Rights Commission  
Bhabani Bhavan, Alipore  
Kolkata - 700027

INDIA

Tel: +91 33 4797259 / 5558866

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5. Mr. Jean Ziegler

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

c/o Mr. Carlos Villan Duran

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(ATTENTION: SR RIGHT FOOD)

6. Mr. Gian Pietro Bordignon

Country Director

World Food Programme

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E-mail: [WFP.NewDelhi@wfp.org](mailto:WFP.NewDelhi@wfp.org)

7. Mr. Anthony Banbury

Regional Director

World Food Programme

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THAILAND

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Email: [Anthony.banbury@wfp.org](mailto:Anthony.banbury@wfp.org) or [Bkk.unescap@un.org](mailto:Bkk.unescap@un.org)

8. Dr. N.C. Saxena and Mr. S.R. Sankaran  
Commissioners

Supreme Court of India  
SAMYA, R-38A, 2nd floor  
South Extension - part 2  
New Delhi - 49

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Thank you.

Urgent Appeals Programme-Hunger Alert  
Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

Posted on 2005-11-11

Back to [2005 Urgent Appeals]

The Government of West Bengal declared the village  
Department in rural village in the year 1976 and after 20  
years of rural development work of the village, the  
Government only for the year 2005-06 will be the  
rural development work.

It is a very important fact that the village has been fully  
covered by the Government of West Bengal and a number of  
the people have been benefited from the work of the  
Government of West Bengal in the year 2005-06.

Village - Kharagpur

1. Total population	1000
2. No. of families - total families	500
3. No. of male members	500 (100%)
4. No. of female members	500 (100%)
5. No. of SC families	10
6. Family members involved in smuggling	100
7. No. of families in the village	50

UPDATE (India): Starvation deaths continue despite government's commitment to provide food assistance in West Bengal

UPDATE ON HUNGER ALERT UPDATE ON  
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ALERT

ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - URGENT  
APPEALS PROGRAM

Update on Hunger Alert

16 September 2005

[Re: UA-161-2005: INDIA: Human rights defender physically assaulted, threatened and detained by government officials; HU-04-2005: INDIA: UNICEF still avoiding responsibility in providing assistance to starving women and children in West Bengal; UA-59-2005: INDIA: Police attack on human rights defender and his family in Murshidabad, West Bengal; HA-02-2005: INDIA: Starvation deaths occurring in Murshidabad district, West Bengal]

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HU-07-2005: UPDATE (India): Starvation deaths continue despite government's commitment to provide food assistance in West Bengal

INDIA: Starvation death; inadequate government action

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Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has received updated information from Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (Masum) regarding the current hunger situation in Jalangi, Murshidabad, West Bengal. After months of suffering from hunger and malnutrition, the people of Jalangi were delighted to hear that

their names would now be listed under state welfare schemes. However, five days after this victory, another starvation death occurred in the district, pointing to the failures of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in West Bengal.

The AHRC urges you to request for an immediate investigation into the matter, pressing upon the appropriate authorities to take responsibility for the inefficient and ineffective welfare schemes currently found in West Bengal. While the government's action of listing victims under the PDS is commendable, it is still inadequate in protecting the right to food in India.

Urgent Appeals Desk - Hunger Alert Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

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#### UPDATE INFORMATION:

On September 4, 2005, the villagers of Jalangi, Murshidabad rejoiced at the good news; over 500 names, submitted by Masum, were added to about 20 ration dealer shops throughout the district. This meant that for the first time, the hunger victims in Jalangi would benefit from subsidized food through the Public Distribution System (PDS). Men, women and children in the area ran to the ration shops, eager to celebrate the seeming victory.

Masum had previously submitted the names to local authorities in March 2005, and met with the Block Development Officer and District Magistrate in Murshidabad, and the governor of West Bengal about the hunger crisis in mid-July. They were concerned that if the government did not act quickly to help the victims, violence was imminent in Jalangi.

However, on September 9, 2005, the severity of the hunger crisis in Jalangi was realized again. Hazrat Mollah, aged 55, died of starvation in Dayarampur village. He had been suffering from malnutrition for a long period of time.

Hazrat's name was one of the many that had been submitted to the PDS (SL. No. 64). However, he was still unable to provide food for himself and unfortunately, passed away only five days

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after being afforded assistance.

This is not the first instance where the inefficiency of the PDS has resulted in hunger and starvation in West Bengal. It has been reported on several occasions that the quality or quantity of assistance is insufficient, that ration shops are closed, or that one has been denied food assistance even when providing proof of being a ration card holder.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For over 10 years, the Padma River has been eroding. Many homes and livelihoods have disappeared because of the swelling river, and the result has been the starving villagers in Jalangi. In recent years, the erosion has worsened and the hunger situation has grown significantly.

Several hunger deaths have been reported in the area, most recently on March 7, 2005. Please see HA-02-2005 for more details pertaining to the hunger crisis that persists.

Moreover, hunger and starvation in Jalangi has been a highly sensitive issue for the local authorities in Murshidabad. Mr. Gopen Sharma, a human rights worker from the area, has been threatened and attacked on numerous occasions by police and government officials for supporting the victims of hunger. Please see UA-59-2005 and UA-161-2005 for more information.

[Hunger Alert] UPDATE (India): UNICEF still avoiding responsibility in providing assistance to starving women and children in West Bengal

UPDATE ON HUNGER ALERT UPDATE ON HUNGER  
ALERT UPDATE ON HUNGER ALERT

ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - URGENT  
APPEALS PROGRAM

Update on Hunger Alerts  
21 April 2005

[Re: HU-02-2005: 5 year-old girl, evicted from her home by government authorities, dies of starvation in West Bengal; HA-02-2005: Starvation deaths occurring in Murshidabad district, West Bengal; HU-01-2005: Total negligence by local authorities regarding the eviction of approximately 7,000 Untouchables in Bellilious Park; HA-06-2004: Indian Red Cross ignores starvation of Kolkata evictees; UP-03-2004: An AHRC letter to the president of the India regarding eviction of Untouchables; UP-54-2003: 3 year old eviction victim died due to starvation in West Bengal, FA-27-2003: 7,000 Untouchables in Bellilious Park evicted by the government of West Bengal and the Howrah Municipal Corporation]

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HU-04-2005: INDIA: UNICEF still avoiding responsibility in providing assistance to starving women and children in West Bengal

INDIA: Starvation and malnutrition; Inaction by humanitarian organizations and government

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Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has received further information from Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (Masum)

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on the current status of Unicef's interest and involvement in the starvation and malnutrition of several communities in West Bengal. The AHRC, along with staff from Masum, have repeatedly pleaded with the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) in Kolkata, to provide assistance to the families removed from Bellilious Park. The victims currently live in horrendous conditions at the Belgachia garbage dump and go without food, shelter, drinking water, and a proper sanitation system (see: FA-27-2003; UP-54-2003; HA-06-2004 and HU-02-2005).

Unicef Kolkata has been in communication with the AHRC and Masum since they declined to meet representatives of the two organizations in February (see: HU-01-2005; AHRC-PL-11-2005 and AHRC-PL-19-2005).

Masum organized a protest outside Unicef's Kolkata office on March 23, 2005, which was attended by 500 victims from across West Bengal, and met with Unicef staff members (see: HU-02-2005). On April 8, 2005, two Unicef staff members also visited Masum's office and again restated Unicef's commitment to starvation cases in West Bengal. However, to date, no action has been taken by Unicef in regards to the Bellilious Park victims or other persons suffering hunger in the state to whom Masum has drawn its attention.

The AHRC urges you to write to Unicef in Kolkata, New Delhi and abroad pressing them to act on their stated commitment to provide assistance for starvation victims. While the dialogue is appreciated it is futile; people in West Bengal will continue to die if they do not receive assistance immediately.

Urgent Appeals Desk — Hunger Alert Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

#### UPDATED INFORMATION:

On April 8, 2005, two staff members from Unicef's Kolkata office met with Mr. Kirity Roy, a secretary of Masum, at Masum's office in Howrah. Mrs. Negi and Mr. Suman visited Masum and inquired about the current status of starvation among victims from Jalangi, Murshidabad (see: HA-02-2005) and Bellilious Park. At the

meeting, the Unicef representatives were provided with 412 individual family complaints filed by victims from the Jalangi in Murshidabad district who lost their homes and cultivated land. The victims currently have nothing and are not under any government poverty alleviation schemes or humanitarian assistance programmes. The two representatives were also provided with a list containing the details of the victims forcibly evicted from Bellilious Park. Masum further suggested the representatives visit the Belgachia dumping ground where many of the evictees currently reside. However they indicated that they would do so at another time. An unnamed media source did report Unicef visiting with some victims at the dumpsite, though we have not received sufficient information to confirm this.

During the visit, Unicef restated its commitment to providing assistance to starvation victims and informed Masum that they have requested more information from the District Magistrate of Howrah, District Magistrate of Murshidabad and Foreign Ministry. They also informed that they would contact them within the month to discuss any developments in the matter.

To date however, no assistance or ration cards have been provided to the Bellilious Park evictees, Jalangi victims, or E.M. Parvathi (see: UP-54-2003 and HU-02-2005), a former Bellilious Park victim who lost much of her family to starvation. At the protest, opposition leader Mr. Pankaj Banerjee committed himself to providing Parvathi with assistance and a ration card. She and her family however, are yet to receive any aide.

[Hunger Alert] INDIA: Starvation deaths occurring in  
Murshidabad district, West Bengal

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ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - URGENT  
APPEALS PROGRAM

7 March 2005

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HA-02-2005: INDIA: Starvation deaths occurring in  
Murshidabad district, West Bengal

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INDIA: Starvation death; government inaction and neglect

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Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has received information from Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (Masum) in West Bengal, India, that people in Murshidabad district are dying of starvation while the government authorities have not taken any effective action to stop the deaths. One five-year-old boy is reported to have been eating dirt before he died. According to a local doctor, "The entire area is under threat of insufficient nutritious food."

Masum reports that no government programmes to address starvation are properly functioning in the area, despite the fact that the local authorities are well aware of what is going on.

The AHRC urges you to write to the concerned authorities, including the Chief Minister of West Bengal, and call on them to take necessary emergency action to stop any further deaths from occurring in Murshidabad district, and longer-term steps to address the food crisis there.

Urgent Appeals Desk — Hunger Alert  
Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

A boy at Paraspur village, Jalangi, Murshidabad running to get food after 3 days' hunger.

DETAILED INFORMATION:

Location: Dayarampur village and surrounding areas, including Udayanagar, Suryanagar Colony and Paraspur, Murshidabad district, West Bengal, India.

Persons affected:

Numerous, including

1. Azizul Haque
2. Alimuddin Seik, aged about 67, husband of Jahida Beoa
3. Jahida Beoa, aged 60, wife of Alimuddin Seik
4. Sattar Seik, aged 50

Date of last reported death: 25 February 2005 (deaths ongoing)

On a recent visit to the Murshidabad district of West Bengal, colleagues of Masum were shocked to hear reports of numerous recent starvation deaths among villagers there, about which the authorities appear to be doing nothing. Some of the reports that Masum has received are as follows:

1. Neimuddin stated that his brother Azizul Haque died of hunger because of no work to earn a livelihood. Neimuddin said that before his brother died he had not witnessed any cooking at his home for days. His brother finally died of starvation. Up to today Azizul's wife and son are starving, and may also die from hunger soon.

2. Sukuda Bibi, a relative of Alimuddin Seik and his wife Jahida Beoa, says that both of them died recently after their bodies swelled up from malnutrition. Sukuda Bibi told the Rural Health Centre of Sadikhanrdeyar that there was no food at home. Whatever they had, no matter how unhygienic or lacking in nutrition, they ate up in a desperate and ultimately failed attempt to survive. Dr Ashish Kumar Ghosh, the Medical Officer attached with the Rural Health Centre, said that, "The cause of death in Jahida's case was associated with old age problems. However, malnutrition was one of the

major causes of her suffering. I visited the victims' village and found that the entire area is under threat of insufficient nutritious food."

3. Sattar Seik died of hunger at the Behrampur District Sadar Hospital. He was referred there from the Rural Health Centre of Sadikhanrdeyar. On this case Dr Ashish Kumar Ghosh said, "We don't have proper and sufficient medical equipment and so we have to refer our patients to the district hospital." Dr Matiur Rahman, a doctor attached to the Behrampur District Hospital said, "The patients who have been referred to here are not in condition even to utter a word. They have been kept on oxygen but nothing can be said regarding their improvement."

4. Shyamali Halder said, "Another five-year-old boy also died suffering from the same cause. Five days ago his stomach was swelled up. It was found out that he had been living by eating dirt. For many days there had been no cooking in his house."

According to Masum, "Every day someone or the other dies of hunger in the village of Dayarampur or among other adjacent villages. They have not even heard of Annapurna Yojana, a central government scheme intended to give them food grains when in need. One handicapped man named Amir Shah complained that their names have not even been included in the Below Poverty Line list, which would allow them to apply for assistance."

When the Sub-divisional Officer of Murshidabad, Mr Rabindranath Sarkar, was approached he admitted that there is an acute problem and shortage of food grains in different villages of this district. He said that he is trying to make his best possible effort from a limited capacity. He also said that he has informed the District Magistrate about these incidents.

Mr Kanchan Chowdhury, the Block Development Officer of Jalangi, in Murshidabad district, said, "Women of this locality are fleeing to other places to get work. We are looking for options to address this economic crisis. Hopefully it will work out soon."

Mr Yunush Sarkar, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, West Bengal, said that like other countries, people in Murshidabad too are below the poverty level, but he denied that they are dying of hunger.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Masum has also written the following:

"The hunger in Murshidabad district has affected the villagers so badly that a large number have been displaced to other areas looking for means to survive. Large numbers of students are dropping out of the schools, as it is almost impossible to carry on studies with an empty stomach, and they are being sent by their families to work elsewhere. People say that so many meetings have been held with the local Block Development Officer and other officers attached with the local civil administration, and also the village council, but all have been in vain.

"Apart from this, fertile agricultural land, houses, cattle and everything are being ruined, and the environmental conditions are worsening. These villages are situated along the river Padma, the bank of which has been eroding for the last ten years. As a result, fertile land is being lost. Since 2002 the erosion has rapidly increased. Almost all able-bodied male members of Dayarampur village have left in search of work elsewhere, leaving their elderly, female members and children at home, who are falling prey to starvation. Last year too, two children breathed their last due to starvation.

"The government is making mockery of basic human rights. According to the authorities, India is now self-sufficient in food grains. Our country is also sending so many shiploads of grain to different countries affected by natural calamities like the tsunami, while our own people are dying for want of food. The warehouses of the Food Corporation of India are full, but the people in such circumstances have nothing. The West Bengal government is letting its people starve in violation of its constitutional obligations, and those under international law."



## Gathering Experiences from the Government's Desks

An Experience: sweet and bitter

Focus - Jalangi, Murshidabad and Bellilious Park Howrah, West Bengal

This is merely a simple effort to look into the government systems and panchayet administration and their commitment towards the upliftment of the standard of rural mass. It is well-known that there was much ado before and hopes after the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment in India with a view to strengthen the village panchayet, the bottom administrative unit in India. It was viewed that this sort of step will provide our villagers a glittering life pattern making them within the access of administration. Rajiv Gandhi accredited to have presented that great achievement to the country.

India is still engaging its 85% population in agro- activity and its budget is known as agro-budget. Mahatma Gandhi once said that India's soul rests in the villages. He emphatically said it is a first and foremost duty of the Centre and all the State governments to take appropriate measures for the well beings of the villagers.

Here more interesting is this fact that most of the people's representatives are from the village sides and they include it in their election manifesto that their victory will change the rural scenario to a positive aspect. But, after being elected they don't feel it good to raise the rural matters in the assembly or parliament. They seem to be standing by the government officials who may be perpetrators in many cases and rebuke the rural mass. Thus, it can be said even the leaders are seen to make nexus with the government officials but lack the chain the coordination with the people. Here, it is no exaggeration that however the concept of feudalism (Medieval concept of Europe) vanishes or landlord ship has been eradicated from India but these concepts are still prevailed in Indian scenario where the farmers are cheated, looted, humiliated by the nexus of leaders and bureaucrats thus causing deep dissatisfaction which reflect as MCC, Maoism, People's War Group, etc.

Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM) in the re-

cent past conducted fact-finding enquiries on the issue of "starvation death". Experiences of MASUM are those that the memory of Amlashol in Midnapore district, an example of the recent past that shook the conscience of the country has not faded into oblivion. Apart from Amlashol, there are thousands of wretched countrymen who have either being rotted with their poverty or dying in starvation, being devoid of any food, nutrition or medical treatment. The sordid saga of the hunger-starvation and death do exist from the *adivasis* (indigenous people) and marginal peasants in Sandeshkhali or Hasnabad in North 24 Parganas to the areas of Canning and Basanti in South 24 Parganas, tea gardens of North Bengal or drought-affected areas in Bankura and Purulia districts, victims of land erosion in Murshidabad and Malda, dalits of Bellilious Park in Howrah in the State of West Bengal.

The problem of the wretched lies with the eternal one - their poverty, but the causes are manifold. Sometimes it happens to be topographical, natural disasters or changes in their earning status. In some places it is liable for eviction in places without rehabilitation and apathy of the vested interests towards them. But in most cases they are being victimized by the Government and administrative inaction, callousness of the government officials and a general apathy to do rightful duties towards the ill-fated people.

The increasing number of the cases of death due to hunger and starvation in the gangetic basins of West Bengal has been attracting our attention since long. And the continuous and systematic denial, apathy and indifferent attitude of the government towards this natural disasters and its victims have forced us to think twice, whether we are really living in a country aimed at building a state of a socialist-welfare-democratic model, with a good governance. Such cases appear to be epidemic and mainly caused by some geographical disadvantages. The encroachment of river Padma, a subsidiary of the Ganges, the longest river in India, on the embankment resulted in erosion and reduction of land and compelled uncountable number of people of the villages namely Dayarampur, Udayanagar, Suryanagar Colony, Paraspur, and hundreds of other villages in the district of Murshidabad and Malda. Moreover, to live

in such a land fast encroaching by river Padma and above all the step brotherly tendency of the both Central and State administrative machineries has made it more complicated and pathetic. In fact, these victimized people of the devastated area including women and children have no option left, but to flee from their villages for their livelihood and survival. Despite extensive media/news coverage about the incidents, the departments concerned of the State machinery are not paying any effective heed to uphold the condition of these ill-fated villagers.

### GRADUAL STEPPING

This paragraph serves a source of narration how MASUM stepped out with Jalangi and Bellilious Park starving people to various all and sundry desks of administration of West Bengal to make them aware of their true irony with a purpose of a complete redressal of their grievances.

**MASUM at the Governor House:** On 23 March 2005, MASUM organized a huge demonstration making all the victims from Jalangi and Bellilious Park a part thereof and marched quite good miles in Kolkata and put deputation to various authorities of the State government. First of all, one delegation under leadership of Mr. Sadhan Roy Chowdhury, President of MASUM and veteran human right activist cum artist Mr. Kallol Das Gupta accompanied with the victims namely Ms. E. M. Parvati & her minor daughter Durga of Bellilious Park and Mrs. Shyamali Halder of Jalangi with her minor son met Mr. Gopal Krishna Gandhi, the Honourable Governor of the State at Rajbhaban. Both those victims were representing the same irony others were suffering in their localities and chosen to be a part of delegation as the starvation snatched their dear ones from them. Parvati lost her one son Shiva-3years, another son- Taklu, about 8 months, daughter Lachhmi- 5years and even husband Ganesh just because it was totally unaffordable for her family to provide them two times meals and medicine and Shyamali had the same fatelosing her 2 years old son fed on earth for couple of days because there was no food grains at home and breathed his last.

Mr. Gandhi met the team and heard their grief with rapt attention how they lost their children and one even her husband for want of meals and medicine. Mr. Gandhi who seemed to be very pathetic hearing their tales and committed to do something for those families and for the other victims of Jalangi and of Belgachhia *Vagar* (dumping ground).

Thereafter, we got a number of occasions to meet Mr. Gopal Krishna Gandhi and kept him aware of the situation narrated above. In most of the cases, Mr. Governor called us and on behalf of him, Mr. Dilip Kumar Rath, IAS, Secretary to the Governor made our programme possible taking his personal care as the matter concerned to sole humanity.

Mr. Gandhi to whom MASUM will ever be thankful for his great deed promised to render all the possible help to Ms. E.M. Parvati, an evictee of Bellilious Park, Howrah with regard to her daughter's education and also to repay her debt. For education Sister Cyril was consulted who accepted his proposal of educating her daughter at the Loreto School, Sealdah, Kolkata. For her health MASUM has been concerned to her for three - four months last and paying a lump-sum amount to be spent on medicine and other sots of check-up as Parvati has been a patient of tuberculosis.

MASUM got information from the Raj Bhawan (Governor House) that on 16 November 2005, the Governor, Mr. Gandhi made his official visit to Domkal in the district of Mushidabad where he talked to Mr. Narayan Manjubnath Prasad, the District Magistrate, Murshidabad over the matters of Jalangi and enquired of why the list containing the names of people deprived of BPL, Annapurna, Antyodaya, etc submitted by MASUM eight months ago was still pending without any action. He also asked the D.M. if he had been paying special attention to those families who had lost dear ones due to hunger. MASUM expresses its warm pleasure and want to extend the same to every corner that the Hon'ble Governor of the State, Mr. Gandhi too want a fair result on this matter.

What shocks MASUM is the callousness of the government

which is the executive body. The Governor being the Constitutional head of a State is so pathetic hearing one particular matter and took step for redressal and all the communications for this sake are being sent to the government through the various channel. But, the government is posing sedentary turning almost all a deaf ear to.

**MASUM at the Legislative Assembly:** One delegation under the leadership of Mr. Kirit Roy, Secretary, MASUM along with some victims approached to the State Legislative Assembly for which all the persons were issued gate-passes by one member of legislative assembly but it is highly vexed that they were not allowed to enter the Assembly Hall by the security staffs and a huge police contingent were posted at the entrance gate to resist the delegation team of MASUM. Mr. Pankaj Banerjee, Leader of the Opposition and Mr. Tapas Roy, MLA rushed to the gate of Assembly House, talked with victims, received the memorandum and expressed their worries in public/media. Mr. Banerjee said, "This is an example that how the government is in fascist manner obstructing the people to raise their voice".

**MASUM at the UNICEF:** MASUM has been in touch of the evictees of Bellilious Park and raised this issue up to international level through Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong. Finding the evictee children in destitute Mr. Nick Cheesman, Program Director of AHRC intended to meet Mr. Swank heading the Kolkata UNICEF with a plea for providing due facilitation to these children in February 2005. Though the appointed was granted, nobody was available at the office of the UNICEF to talk to Mr. Cheesman over the said issue.

After couple of days Ms. Cecil Adorna, Country Representative, UNICEF, New Delhi, India wrote to Mr. Basil Fernando, Executive Director, AHRC, Hong Kong in which she wrote that UNICEF, Kolkata had done lots of things for the well being of the evictees and their children living at Belgachia dumping ground. This made MASUM dissatisfied because the letter of Ms. Adorna was speaking the truth.

On 23 March 2005 MASUM led demonstration and put depu-

tation to Mr. Swank, State Representative, UNICEF, Kolkata and made him aware that nothing such thing had been done for those ill-fated people and made him aware of the true picture. About 3000 people from Jalangi and Bellilious Park (Belgachia dumping ground) took part in this demonstration. At this, UNICEF, Kolkata promised them to visit the area and do the needful. AHRC issued a number of letters and Urgent Appeals and the matter was discussed in international forum.

It was learnt from the Kolkata UNICEF office that they don't do anything without the consent of the government and utilize their fund where they are asked or pointed to do by the state government. It is something very ironical that that these international agencies are not there to stand by the victims but the perpetrators' side because it is clear that if our government were so attentive to the victims there would be no need of any international organization. It is clear that the so-called organizations are prospering the corrupt system with their lucrative funding system which is also the misuse of public money.

**MASUM at the District Collectorate, Murshidabad:** From January up to now MASUM has been monitoring all the happenings at Jalani and raising these matters at the authorities concerned right from the District Magistrate to the Block Development Officer. Several memorandums were submitted to the offices of District Magistrate Mr. Mr. Narayan Manjunath Prasad and the Additional Disstrict Magistrate (General Administration) Mr. Gulam Ali Ansari and consulted in the month of July this year when havoc erosion was taking place destroying almost all possessions of the villagers of Dayarampur, Paraspur, Taltali, Biswaspara and others. They were requested to render all sorts of cooperation to those villagers for survival. In wake of this plea, two trucks of rice reached Dayarampur but the villagers refused to take that rice as it was rotten. MASUM then and there after having this news contacted the DM who told that the quality of rice was good.

**MASUM at the Block Office, Jalangi:** The representatives of MASUM have been in touch of the Block Development Officer,

Mr. Kanchan Chowdhury to have the gradual development on the matter of rehabilitation and other sorts of facilitation to the victims. Now Mr. Chowdhury was succeeded by Mr. Mahto and MASUM also discussed this issue with him. Apart from these officers, Mr. Gautam, Joint BDO of Jalangi was also consulted and contacted for discussion the same matters.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the Indian Constitution empowering village *Panchayet* system gave much hope to the villagers that the dream of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of nation of India came true. It was decided that all the development work was done by the Panchayet directly and the fund was allocated through the Block offices. Thus, BDO being the kingpin of the Block administration serves better responsibility as not only an administration but also as a leader and coordinator. But, the statement given by Mr. Chaowdhury as a BDO sprinkles water on this hope of the villagers when he says that he knows the boulders brought for the purpose of arresting erosion are kept in mounts along the road side but he can't do anything as it doesn't fall under his administrative capacity but the department of Irrigation. He also fails to provide sufficient information on the distribution of rice or other grains under the various welfare schemes such as BPL, Antyadaya, Annapurna, etc.

**Dr. P. Sengupta**  
M.B.B.S. (Cal.), M.D. (Cal.)

Chamber:

114, B. Road, Bamungachi,  
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Mobile : 9830816638

26<sup>th</sup> September 2005

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

As a panel member of the "Public Tribunal Enquiring into Starvation & Deaths at Jalangi, Murshidabad" I heard out the petitioners /villagers complaining of hunger which was held on 23 - 24 September 2005 at Bankim Nivas, Jalangi. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September, at my courtroom I checked some petitioners and the villagers, mainly the children. On 24<sup>th</sup> September myself along with the other panel members visited some villages of Jalangi. There I also examined some children at random.

Here are my findings -

According to the standard Growth Chart used by I.C.D.S. of the Government of India the following children are in Grade- III type of Malnutrition.

1. Toton Sharma, aged 2 years 6 months  
Son of Lakhi Narayan Sharma
2. Samas Halder, aged 2 years 11 months
3. Samirul, aged 1 year 7 months  
Son of Babu Shan
4. Bilkis, aged 3 years 1 months  
Daughter of Asadul Shan
5. Hasina, aged 1 year 10 months  
Daughter of Humayun Seikh
6. Rabina, aged 2 years  
Daughter of Rosdar Seikh

According to Waterlow classification of W.H.O. all the above children (under five years of age) are having acute wasting type of malnutrition and are severely impaired. If immediate measures are not taken then these under five years aged children who are acutely and severely under malnutrition are likely to die very soon.

*P. Sengupta*  
(Dr. P. Sengupta) **Dr. P. Sengupta**  
M.B.B.S. (Cal) M.D. (Cal)

Reg. No. 52297

Read. No. 52297



*Death certificate*

This is to certify that Biparna Halder aged 1 1/2 yrs. son of Bikash Halder of Vill Dayarampur P.S. Jalangi, Dist. Murshidabad. Died on 12.3.04 at about 4.30 AM hours, She could not get adequate food since long and her general condition of health was too low, the cause of death is, in my opinion - Seallowing febrile mtd.

at Anarul Shah  
12.3.04

Dr. Anarul Shah R.M.P. (C.M.)  
Vill. Dayarampur  
P.O.—D. Parashpur  
P.S. Jalangi, Dist. Murshidabad  
Ren. No.—9836


Admission Ticket  
Speaker's Enclosure  
(Downstairs)



No. 398

Admit Mr. Kisiti Roy  
as a guest of the Hon'ble Speaker to the sitting of the  
West Bengal Legislative Assembly on \_\_\_\_\_ day,  
the 23-3-2005

"Assembly House",  
Kolkata:

  
Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly

This 22-3-2005

  
For Instruction—See reverse

Masum was forcefully denied entry in Assembly House,  
despite proper permission



Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (masum)

26, Guitendal Lane, Howrah-711101  
West Bengal, India

Phone : (91 33) 2640 4118  
E-mail : masumindia@gmail.com  
Web : www.masumindia.org

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26 July 2005  
The Hon'ble Governor  
Government of West Bengal  
Raj Bhaban  
Kolkata - 700 001

**Sub : Your Humble Attention to the Matters of Starvation and River Erosion of Jalangi, Murshidabad.**

His Excellency,

We, the members of MASUM, a human rights organisation in West Bengal would like to draw your kind attention to the prolonged sufferings of the people affected with erosion of river embankment, Padma resulting in to series of starvation deaths in the district of Murshidabad at Jalangi Block. The district administrative machinery has miserably failed in controlling the situation due to inefficiency, corruption and inactivity in all levels despite a number of cases have been highlighted by MASUM to create national and international pressure to activate this administrative system.

People of Jalangi, Murshidabad have been suffering from the erosion of the river Padma for last ten years and lost all their agricultural and bastu land including homestead, cattle, household articles etc. The devastating natural calamity affected them so adversely that in an hour the economic status of the victim changed abruptly and become have-nots from the earlier convenient economic conditions. The owner of hundreds bighas of land become a landless labour. The condition suddenly become so miserable that the victim families are not in position to provide even two times meal in a day to the children. The villages, Dayarampur, Parashpur and Taltali are mostly affected by river erosion.



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So, this situation has produced the root of starvation deaths in the District. In wake of this information MASUM organized demonstration and deputed before Your Excellency, the Legislative Assembly and the UNICEF in Kolkata on 23 March, 2005 with the starving people of Jalangi Block. highlighting the starvation deaths in the area.

To arrest such erosion. the Central and State governments released crores of rupees but where this money goes remains a mystery and fate of the common affected people remained unaltered. Only some boulders are being thrown in the bank of Padma haphazardly here and there without any scientific programme and planning. The top levels of administration were made aware of the actual condition of Murshidabad as fo how they were deprived of the various Relief Schemes i.e. Annapurna, Antyodaya, G.R.. B.P.L and others. We also informed Asian Human Rights Commission and other fraternal organizations, both national and international levels of this situation. Different media also reported this situation very strongly. After lot of pressure the local administration had been forced to take steps and ultimately food grains (rice) were distributed among the starving masses but the rice was not fit even for animals consumption.

To add fuel to the fire to the tragedy and plight of the people, they have to face the atrocity and torture of the B.S.F who are stationed in the town of Jalangi and inflict tremendous torture on the people. There is no trace of privacy; women have to attend their nature's call under open sky and some of the B.S.F. personnel are always there to watch all these for fun.

We have observed that miles aHer miles approximately 10 K.M x 19 K.M. land at Jalangi block have come up on the other side of river, which falls under the territories of India. Ten years ago a/l these londs were cultivated by the Indian farmers. But, now after



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'00

(3)

resurfacing of the land these farmers are stopped by the -B.S.F. personnel from going that side for the agricultural purpose. The huge fertile land is used as corridors by the smugglers. We strongly suggest that the surfaced land be distributed to the affected people for agricultural purpose so that the affected people can harvest there and earn their livelihood.

Immediately, we appeal to your conscience that the victims may be rehabilitated and the government benefits should reach to the victims directly without hindrance and bureaucratic interference.

Please find enclosed herewith the list of ill-fated persons who deserve to be enrolled as the beneficiaries of the B.P.L, G.R, Altyadaya, Annapurna and other reltef schemes but they have been deprived of the same. This list also includes names of those who have lost their shelter and have not got Rs. 2000/-, which were declared by the government for the construction of shelter. On the contrary, the persons having definite political connection and affluence are usurping the benefit of all these schemes. We have experience of misuse of public money to large extent under the Block of Jalangi.

We look forward to you for an immediate intervention.

Yours faithfully,

Kirity Roy

Secretary

# The Statesman

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## Starvation a reality in state, says report

Asim Pramanik  
in Behrampore

Oct. 28. – It is time for the international community to take a look at the confirmed report of starvation deaths in a Marxists-ruled state in India. The Jalangi starvation report prepared last month by the probe panel of the former judges of Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi High Courts would be published soon.

The report has confirmed that acute starvation is a reality in West Bengal. The panel led by the former judge of Mumbai High Court, Mr H Suresh visited the starvation-hit areas of Jalangi block in Murshidabad district, stayed there for two days and conducted direct hearing which was attended by the family members of starvation death victims, their neighbours and those suffering from acute hunger and poverty in the villages like Paraspur, Taltoli, Dayarampur, Biswaspara in Jalangi.


The quasi-judicial exercise by the judges, human rights activists and medical experts on 23 and 24 September this year, was termed as people's tribunal that enquired into the starvation prevailing in Jalangi and the deaths caused by hunger and malnutrition.

The starvation deaths in Jalangi first came to light following an exclusive coverage by The Statesman and Dainik Statesman in last February. According to subsequent media reports, at least 10 people died of hunger in the erosion-affected villages along the Indo-Bangla border in Jalangi.

“The starvation situation in Jalangi was assessed as per the stan-

dard laid down by the World Health Organisation. The former high court judges went door to door in the hunger-hit villages and ascertained the problem. Our medical experts got the findings that confirm starvation. People falling prey at random to blindness owing to deficiency of vitamin-A also found place in the reports by medical experts," Mr Kirity Roy, secretary of MASUM, human rights body jointly working with Asian Human Rights Commission said. Mr Roy added that the tribunal report would be published in a few days and the United Nations reports on starvation would have a comprehensive coverage on the findings of the tribunal which was led by the former judge of Mumbai High Court, Mr H Suresh





Since the 1970s, lakhs of people living on the Ganga-Padma embankment in Malda and Murshidabad have fallen prey to the wrath of angry rivers. Due to continuous erosion of river Padma, people in the area have been losing their agricultural lands, fleeing their homes, reeling under poverty and even starving to death....

In Jalangi, in Murshidabad district about 600 families in different villages are now living on starvation diet. As the river Padma is fast approaching, hundreds of people are facing the threat of being uprooted any day.

Devoid of any relief, apathetic attitude of the Government, deep-rooted corruption at the local level and deprivation in all respect have forced a large section of people on the brink of extinct.

Since January 2005, MASUM and AHRC have been in touch with the local administration and trying to draw the attention of the officials to the miserable condition prevailing in Jalangi. And being not happy with the official response took the initiative to constitute a public tribunal on 23-24 September, 2005

The Report of the tribunal, statements and documents together, constitute a tragic story of human misery on the one hand and the apathy of a heartless administration of the state on the other hand.

The report addressed to the civil society and also to the international community to draw their attention about the real problems that need to be addressed for restoration of the rule of law and standard of human rights, which are at stake in West Bengal.