

>

Title: Need to take steps to correctly identify starvation deaths and persons living in starvation and provide relief thereon.

DR. SHASHI THAROOR (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM): The number of starvation deaths reported in the country in the past few years is nil. Nevertheless, regional media frequently reports starvation deaths. The Government should ensure that starvation deaths are recorded as they are and not as deaths due to other causes. Across the country, starvation deaths are being recorded by government officials as deaths due to tuberculosis, alcoholism or other hunger-related diseases. This practice window-dresses the number of starvation deaths and leads to a misdirection of government programs aimed at combating starvation. Several schemes are present to check malnutrition and combat hunger. The proposed food security Act also directs the State Governments to identify people living in starvation. Then why is there a need to hide starvation deaths. Proper identification only can lead to requisite steps being taken to better the situation. Recording them as deaths due to other causes just makes the fight against hunger futile.

The population in the habitat where a starvation death happens is the one that is in dire need of relief. The failure to correctly report starvation deaths takes our attention away from the population in need, throwing them deeper into the abyss. The misreporting is severely detrimental to our quest for food-security.

I urge the Government to take steps to correctly identify starvation deaths and persons living in starvation and provide more effective relief to them.