

# **Dire need to computerize public distribution system**

We all know how manual entries in record books open the door to fraud and make corruption a lot easier. Computerization can eliminate much of this but is slow to catch up with the needs at the ground level.

In order to plug the pilferage of food items meant for distribution to people below the poverty line, the Supreme Court has directed the Union food secretary to hasten the process of computerisation of entire PDS system.

A bench of Justices Dalveer Bhandari and Dipak Misra set a deadline of two months to put in place the computerisation process for the PDS in entire country while asking the food secretary to take up the matter with each state and then submit a report.

The direction came on the recommendations of Justice Wadhwa Committee, citing various lapses in the PDS with states lacking a system to verify the records. If the entire system is computerised, it would help to detect the culprits. The panel had suggested that the states could be asked to submit periodic reports on computerisation plan “to curb the malpractices in PDS, including diversion of food grains and other items.”

The top court also indicated that it would take up the issue of fixing `32 per day earning for a person by the planning commission for deciding the drawing of the poverty line even though the commission and the government had later south to take a different stand that it was not meant for fixing the BPL criteria.

As per the Wadhwa Committee report, the computerisation of PDS would also eliminate the chances of preparing duplicate ration cards, which was one of the major reason for pilferage of food items meant for distribution under the Public distribution System (Asian Age 4-2-12).