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WORLD
ECONOMIC
FORUM

Fight against Crony Capitalism & Neo-liberalism

has become the National Duty
of Every Indian Citizen



BUDGET 2018-19:

an instrument to further
deepen neo-liberalism
that has created massive
inequalities in Indian society.

DANGEROUS
PERIOD



विकास के
नाम पर लूट



Why do they
Love to Hate
Secularism?



Hoodwinking
the Masses



No money
Where
the Mouth is





INSURANCE WORKER

extends
REVOLUTIONARY GREETINGS on
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2018

On this International Women's Day
let us all pledge to promote
Gender Equality,
Women's Empowerment
and fight against
All Feudal Prejudices



Crony Capitalism at its Worst Massive Loot of Public Money

The unearthing of Rs.11346 crore fraud in the Punjab National Bank committed by the glamorous diamond trader Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi has shocked the nation. It is reported that this gigantic fraud has been committed over a period of several years through instruments called as Letter of Understanding which is a bank guarantee usually given against collateral security. However, the LOU certificates to Nirav Modi were issued without any security. It is said the fraudsters have circumvented the rules with the help of some bank staff to cheat the second largest public sector bank in the country. It is difficult to understand how such big transactions did not catch the attention of both internal and external audit as well as the regulator. It is also difficult to believe that a fraud of this magnitude can be carried out without the political patronage and knowledge of the top officials of the bank.

As the investigation progresses, it is coming to light that the Income Tax officials had raided the business concerns of Nirav Modi in January 2017 immediately after demonetisation and some whistle-blowers had written to the Prime Minister about the shady dealings of Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi. The government owes an explanation to the nation as to why no action was taken on the complaints and how Nirav Modi was a part of the Prime Minister's delegation to Davos. It also needs explanation as to how the two fraudsters and their families escaped from the country before the PNB lodged an official complaint. Unfortunately both the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister have maintained a stoic silence and the other ministers in the government are playing the usual game of mud-slinging.

Even before the nation could come to grip with this scam, another fraud amounting to Rs.3695 crore came to light involving the

BUDGET 2018-19:

No money Where the Mouth is

Prof. C. P. Chandrashekhar

10

Hoodwinking the Masses

Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

12

विकास के नाम पर लूट

रामचंद्र शर्मा

15

Why do they Love to Hate Secularism?

R. Rajesham

17

In This Issue

DANGEROUS PERIOD

The crisis in world capitalism has encouraged fascism

Prof. Prabhat Patnaik

20

Insurance News-A M Khan
Working Class Struggles-S.Sridhara
Economic Tid-bits-J.Suresh
For Our Field Force-Arivukkadal

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Rotomac Pens promoter Vikram Kothari. A number of public sector banks were cheated by this business tycoon. The investigations in this case are in the preliminary stage and we are yet to know the full extent of this fraud.

The frauds in the banks and the huge concentration of wealth in the country are the offshoots of crony capitalism and the neo-liberal policies. Nirav Modi is not a case in isolation. The RBI data suggest a much deeper rot. In the last five years, public sector banks have reported 8670 frauds amounting to Rs.61260 crore. In the last financial year alone frauds amounting to Rs.17634 crore were deducted and this does not include the present PNB fraud. The Indian banks are bleeding with Non-Performing Assets increasing each day. The gross NPAs are estimated to be over 9 lakh crore. The government and the banks have failed to take effective steps to recover the bad loans which are primarily due from the big business houses. Rather in the last five years public sector banks have written off Rs.2.49 lakh crore of bad loans and in the last financial year alone this amount written off is a whopping Rs.81683 crore.

India is experiencing the worst form of crony capitalism today. The rise of Jay Amitbhai Shah, the son of Amit Shah is a classic example of crony capitalism. The Wire reported that the worth of his firm Shah

Temple Enterprises Ltd increased 16000 times from Rs.50000 to Rs.80.5 crore. The Modi government refused to investigate the charges attributing this amazing rise to legitimate businesses.

The Modi government came to power promising a transparent and clean government. The impressive slogan of Prime Minister 'Na khaonga na khanedonga' more and more sounds like another election jumla. The government has failed to check corruption. It refuses to inform the people details of the Rafael Deal. It failed to prevent Lalit Modi, Vijaya Mallaya and Nirav Modi escaping from the country. The government refuses to acknowledge the Vyapam Scam and the corruption in Maharashtra and Rajasthan at the top level. The situation is really stinking.

The money being looted belongs to the people of this country. The government of the day is answerable to the people. The Prime Minister must break his deafening silence. The common citizens of India cannot remain mute spectators to this massive loot. They must agitate and demand answers from the government. They must thwart any attempt to divert this issue by stoking divisive and communal fire. Today it has become the national duty of every Indian citizen to fight against crony capitalism and neo-liberalism.

BUDGET 2018-19

Deepening of Neo-Liberal Reforms

The final full year budget presented by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley for 2018-19 further deepens the neo-liberal reforms. The Budget lays down a roadmap for the State to considerably withdraw from the social sector and create space for the private sector. The budget fails to seriously address the pressing issues like crisis in agriculture, massive unemployment, rising inequalities and deprivations of majority of people. The budget refuses to acknowledge that the Indian economy is demand constrained and industrial capacities are under-utilised. The economy cannot be revived to its potential without

creating purchasing capacity. The budget is disappointing and is certain to add further miseries on the working and toiling people.

The Finance Minister has made pious claims that the Budget aims to tackle agriculture and rural distress and is a step towards doubling the farm incomes. But the fund allocations and the policy prescriptions do not match these claims. The assertion that the highest ever allocation of Rs.14.34 lakh crore for agriculture and rural development will work to improve the life standards in rural India needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. This amount includes 11 lakh of institutional credit which

is a financial measure that does not directly help farmers to reduce the cost of cultivation or increase the farm income.

The agriculture sector contributes 16 percent to the GDP and employs nearly half of the total work force. It is a matter of concern that despite record food-grain production, the farmers are in crisis and increasing number is resorting to the desperate measure of ending their lives unable to bear the burden of debt. The Finance Minister has rejected the idea of waiver of farm loan and to bring some kind of social security in the farm sector. The Budget declared that in order to increase the farm income, the government will ensure the Minimum Support Price at cost of production plus fifty percent. It is not clear as to how the government will determine the production cost. But this alone will not give any relief to the agriculture sector as more than 86% farmers fall under small and marginal category and most of them do not have a marketable surplus. The Budget fails to allocate enough resources to create the necessary infrastructure in agriculture sector.

The claim that this is a Budget for Bharat does not allocate the necessary resources. The allocation for rural development has increased marginally in absolute terms but has declined as a proportion to the total budget from 5.1% in 2017-18 to 4.8% in 2018-19. The budgetary allocation for MGNREGA has remained stagnant at Rs.55000 crore which is the Revised Estimates for 2017-18. This will reduce the man-hours under MGNREGA and deprive the rural folks in distress of even this temporary employment.

The budget does not deal with the education sector with the importance it deserves. It is estimated that 65 million children in 6-17 age group are out of school. Despite the fact that Kothari Commission decades back recommended spending 6% of GDP on education, the allocations remain insignificant. The present budget just allocates funds amounting to 0.45% of GDP, a decline from the earlier years. There is a clear tilt towards privatisation of education.

The health sector too gets a raw deal. The National Health Policy has suggested that

2.5% of the GDP of which the Centre share is 40 percent should be spent on health. But the Union health budget stagnates at 0.3% of the GDP. Instead of taking measures to strengthen the primary health care, the Budget has announced an insurance scheme targeting 10 crore poor families of a health cover of Rs.5 lakh each. Neither the details of the scheme are spelt out nor do allocations of resources match the intent. It is well known that most of the medical expenses are on out-patient treatments which an insurance scheme that generally cover the hospitalisation expenses cannot provide any relief. What is therefore required is to invest and strengthen the primary health care system. However, the entire direction points towards the State withdrawal and give further space to the private sector in health. The issues relating to women, SC/ST and minorities have also not been dealt with adequately.

The Budget carries forward the process of selling the public sector to meet the fiscal deficit. The government has targeted to raise around Rs.80000 crore through disinvestment. The Finance Minister has announced the merger of three public sector general insurance companies and to list the new entity in the stock market. While the merger is welcome and it would have been appropriate to merge all four companies, the decision to divest government holding in the merged entity is a retrograde step.

The Finance Minister has refused to tax the rich. The corporate tax for companies with a turn-over of upto Rs.250 crore has been reduced to 25 percent. The salaried tax payers have been left high and dry. The budget resorts to indirect taxation hurting the poor and weaker sections. The proposal to introduce fixed period employment is a direct attack against the working class. This budget which fails to meet the aspirations and expectations of the common people is clearly an instrument to further deepen neo-liberalism that has created massive inequalities in Indian society. This is a regressive budget and has to be opposed. It is a good augury that the trade unions have come together to oppose this anti-people and anti-worker budget.

बजट 2018-19: नव-उदारवादी सुधार और तेज

वित्तमंत्री अरुण जेटली द्वारा 2018-19 के लिये पेश किया गया अन्तिम पूर्ण वर्ष का बजट नव-उदारवादी सुधारों को और अधिक तेज करता है। बजट राज्य के लिये सामाजिक क्षेत्र से समुचित रूप से हटने का रास्ता तैयार करता है तथा निजी क्षेत्र के लिये स्थान पैदा करता है। बजट लोगों की समस्याओं जैसे कृषि संकट, भारी बेरोजगारी, बढ़ती असमानता तथा लोगों की वंचना जैसे मुद्दों को गंभीरता के साथ संबोधित करने में असफल रहता है। बजट यह मानने से मना करता है कि भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में माँग सीमित है तथा औद्योगिक क्षमता का कम इस्तेमाल हो रहा है। अर्थव्यवस्था को इसकी पूरी संभावना के साथ तब तक पुनर्जीवित नहीं किया जा सकता जब तक ऋय क्षमता पैदा नहीं होती है। बजट निराशा पैदा करता है तथा मजदूर व मेहनतकश अवाम की कठिनाईयों में इजाफा होना तय है।

वित्तमंत्री ने इस प्रकार के पवित्र दावे किये हैं कि बजट का उद्देश्य कृषि संकट को कम करना है तथा कृषि से आय दो गुनी करने की दिशा में उठाया गया कदम है। लेकिन धन का आवंटन और नीति इन दावों से मेल नहीं खाते हैं। यह कथन कि कृषि व ग्रामीण विकास के लिये 14.24 लाख करोड़ रुपये का अब तक का सबसे अधिक आवंटन ग्रामीण क्षेत्र के जीवन में सुधार करने का कार्य करेगा, पर कोई व्यक्ति हृदयहीनता से ही विश्वास करेगा। इस धन में 11 लाख औद्योगिक क्रेडिट भी शामिल है जोकि एक ऐसा वित्तीय उपाय है जो किसानों की जोत के मूल्य में कमी करने तथा कृषि आय बढ़ाने में प्रत्यक्ष रूप से मदद नहीं करता है।

कृषि क्षेत्र जी.डी.पी. में 16 प्रतिशत का योगदान करता है तथा लगभग आधी श्रम शक्ति को रोजगार देता है। यह चिंता का विषय है कि खाद्यान्न का रिकार्ड उत्पादन करने के बावजूद किसान संकट में हैं और कर्ज का बोझ न सह पाने के कारण बढ़ती हुई संख्या में हताशापूर्वक अपने जीवन का अन्त कर रहे हैं। वित्तमंत्री ने कृषि ऋण को माफ करने तथा कृषि क्षेत्र में किसी प्रकार की सामाजिक सुरक्षा लाने का प्रस्ताव ठुकरा दिया। बजट में यह घोषणा की गई है कि कृषि आय बढ़ाने के लिये सरकार न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य को उत्पादन लागत से 50 प्रतिशत अधिक रखना सुनिश्चित करेगी। यह साफ नहीं है कि सरकार उत्पादन लागत किस प्रकार तय करेगी। लेकिन अकेले इससे कृषि संकट में राहत नहीं मिलेगी क्योंकि 86 प्रतिशत से भी अधिक किसान छोटे व सीमान्त किसानों की श्रेणी में आते हैं जिनके पास विक्रय के लिये अनाज नहीं है। बजट कृषि क्षेत्र के लिये बुनियादी ढाँचा बनाने के उद्देश्य से पर्याप्त धन का आवंटन करने में भी असफल है।

यह दावा कि यह 'भारत' के लिये बजट है, आवश्यक संसाधन आवंटित नहीं करता है। समग्र राशि के रूप में ग्रामीण विकास के लिये धन का आवंटन कुछ अधिक हुआ है परन्तु पूर्ण बजट के अनुपात के रूप में यह कम हुआ है तथा 2017-18 के 5.1 प्रतिशत के मुकाबले 2018-19 में यह बजट का 4.8 प्रतिशत है। मनरेगा के लिये बजट

55000 करोड़ पर ही ठहरा हुआ है जो 2017-18 के लिये संशोधित अनुमान है। इससे मनरेगा के अन्दर मानव घंटों में कमी हो जायेगी और इससे परेशानी में ग्रामीण व्यक्ति इस अस्थायी रोजगार से भी वंचित हो जायेंगे।

बजट शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में भी इसके महत्व व आवश्यकता के अनुसार व्यवहार नहीं करता। यह अनुमान लगाया गया है कि 6-17 आयु वर्ग के लगभग 6.5 करोड़ स्कूल में नहीं जाते हैं। इस तथ्य के बावजूद कि दशकों पूर्व कोठारी आयोग ने शिक्षा पर 6 प्रतिशत व्यय करने की सिफारिश की थी, बजट में शिक्षा पर आवंटन बहुत कम है। वर्तमान बजट जी.डी.पी. का कुल 0.45 प्रतिशत शिक्षा के लिये आवंटित करता है जो पिछले सालों से कम है। शिक्षा के निजीकरण की ओर झुकाव स्पष्ट है।

स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र के प्रति भी व्यवहार खराब है। राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य नीति ने यह परामर्श दिया था कि जी.डी.पी. के 2.5 प्रतिशत के बराबर स्वास्थ्य पर व्यय किया जाना चाहिये जिसमें केन्द्र का हिस्सा 40 प्रतिशत हो। लेकिन केन्द्र सरकार का स्वास्थ्य बजट जी.डी.पी. के 0.3 प्रतिशत पर ठहर गया है। प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था को मजबूत करने के स्थान पर बजट में एक स्वास्थ्य बीमा योजना प्रेषित की गयी है जिसमें 10 करोड़ गरीब परिवारों के लिये 5 लाख रुपये के कवर का लक्ष्य घोषित किया गया है। न तो योजना को विस्तार पूर्वक बताया गया है और न ही संसाधनों का आवंटन इससे मेल खाता है। यह सर्वविदित है कि ज्यादातर चिकित्सा व्यय अस्पताल के बाहर की चिकित्सा पर खर्च होता है जिसमें कोई बीमा स्कीम मदद नहीं कर सकती क्योंकि सभी स्कीमों अस्पताल में भर्ती होने के बाद के व्यय का ही बीमा कवर प्रदान करती है। इसलिये आवश्यकता प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य केन्द्रों को मजबूत करने तथा उनमें निवेश करने की थी। परन्तु पूरा ध्यान स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र से राज्य को हटाने की ओर तथा स्वास्थ्य में निजी क्षेत्र के लिये और अधिक स्थान पैदा करने की ओर है। स्त्रियों, अनुसूचित जाति/जनजाति व अल्पसंख्यकों के मुद्दों पर भी पर्याप्त रूप से विचार नहीं किया गया है।

वित्तीय घाटे को पूरा करने के लिये बजट सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के विक्रय को आगे ले जाता है। सरकार ने विनिवेश के माध्यम से 80,000 करोड़ पैदा करने का लक्ष्य रखा है। वित्तमंत्री ने सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की तीन आम बीमा कम्पनियों का विलय करने तथा नये निगम को पूंजी बाजार में लिस्ट करने की घोषणा की है। हम इस विलय का स्वागत करते हैं परन्तु वहीं चारों कम्पनियों का विलय होना चाहिये था हालांकि विलय किये गये निगम का विनिवेश एक पीछे का कदम है।

वित्तमंत्री ने धनवानों पर कर लगाने को अस्वीकार कर दिया है। 250 करोड़ टर्न ओवर से कम वाली कम्पनियों के लिये नैगम कर की राशि कम करके 25 प्रतिशत कर दी गई है। वेतन भोगी कर्मचारी सकपका गये हैं। बजट अप्रत्यक्ष करों का सहारा लेता है जिससे गरीब व कमजोर वर्ग के हितों को नुकसान होगा। निश्चित समय के लिये रोजगार; (fixed period employment) का प्रस्ताव मजदूर वर्ग के

खिलाफ सीधा हमला है। यह बजट जो आम लोगों की आशाओं व आकांक्षाओं को पूरा करने में असफल रहता है वह स्पष्ट रूप से नव-उदारवाद को और गहरा बनाने का उपकरण है जिससे भारतीय समाज में भारी असमानताएँ

पैदा हुई हैं। यह एक प्रतिगामी बजट है जिसका विरोध किया जाना चाहिये। यह अच्छा संकेत है कि ट्रेड यूनियनों इस जन-विरोधी व मजदूर-विरोधी बजट का विरोध करने के लिये एक साथ आये हैं।

क्रोनी कैपीटलिज्म सबसे बुरे स्तर पर जनता के पैसे की भारी लूट

नीरव मोदी और उसके मामा मेहुल चैकसी द्वारा पंजाब नेशनल बैंक में की गई 11,346 करोड़ रुपये की धोखाधड़ी के मामले से पूरा देश सकते में है। ऐसी रिपोर्ट आई है कि यह बड़ी धोखाधड़ी पिछले कई वर्षों से लैटर ऑफ अंडरटेकिंग(LOU) नाम के उस उपकरण के माध्यम से हो रही थी जोकि आम तौर पर कोलेटरल सिक्यूरिटी की तरह बैंक गारण्टी के रूप में दी जाती है हालांकि नीरव मोदी को दिये गये ये प्रमाण-पत्र बिना किसी सिक्यूरिटी के जारी किये गये थे। यह कहा गया है कि धोखाधड़ी करने वालों ने कुछ बैंक कर्मचारियों के साथ मिलकर देश में सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की दूसरी सबसे बड़ी बैंक पंजाब नेशनल बैंक के साथ धोखाधड़ी में नियमों को भी अनदेखा किया। यह समझना मुश्किल है कि इतने बड़े लेन-देन ने अन्दर व बाहर के अंकेक्षक (ऑडीटर्स) व नियामक का ध्यान क्यों नहीं खींचा। यह विश्वास करना भी मुश्किल है कि इतनी बड़ी धोखाधड़ी को बिना राजनीतिक संरक्षण के तथा बैंक के बड़े अधिकारियों की जानकारी के बिना अंजाम दिया जा सकता था।

जांच के आगे बढ़ने पर यह प्रकाश में आया है कि नोटबंदी के तुरन्त बाद तथा नीरव मोदी व मेहुल चैकसी के संदिग्ध व्यापार के बारे में कुछ व्हिसिल ब्लोअरों द्वारा प्रधानमंत्री को चिट्ठी भेजने के फौरन बाद जनवरी 2017 में आयकर अधिकारियों द्वारा नीरव मोदी के कुछ व्यापारिक प्रतिष्ठानों पर छापे मारे गये थे। सरकार द्वारा राष्ट्र को यह स्पष्टीकरण दिया जाना चाहिये कि व्हिसिल ब्लोअरों की शिकायतों पर कार्यवाही क्यों नहीं हुई तथा नीरव मोदी दावोस में प्रधानमंत्री के प्रतिनिधिमण्डल में क्यों शामिल था ? इस बात का भी स्पष्टीकरण दिया जाना चाहिये कि पंजाब नेशनल बैंक द्वारा औपचारिक शिकायत दिये जाने से पहले ही धोखाधड़ी करने वाले दोनों व्यक्ति व उनके परिवार देश छोड़ कर कैसे चले गये ? दुर्भाग्य से, प्रधानमंत्री व वित्तमंत्री दोनों ही ने पूरी चुप्पी साध ली है तथा सरकार के अन्य मंत्री एक दूसरे पर कीचड़ उछालने का खेल खेल रहे हैं।

राष्ट्र द्वारा इस धोखाधड़ी पर मजबूत पकड़ बनाने से पहले ही 3,695 करोड़ रुपये की एक अन्य धोखाधड़ी सामने आई जिसमें रौटोमेक पैन के प्रवर्तक विक्रम कोठारी शामिल थे। इस शक्तिशाली व्यापारी द्वारा सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की कई बैंकों के साथ धोखा किया गया था। इस मामले में सम्बन्धित जाँच अपनी प्राथमिक अवस्था में है तथा इस धोखाधड़ी का पूरा मामला अभी उजागर होना है।

बैंकों में हुई धोखाधड़ी तथा देश में सम्पत्ति का भारी केन्द्रीयकरण क्रोनी कैपीटलिज्म व नव-उदारवादी नीतियों की शाखाएँ हैं। नीरव मोदी का मामला अकेला नहीं है।

आर.बी.आई. का डाटा बड़ी संज्ञाध का संकेत देता है। पिछले 5 वर्षों में सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों के साथ 61,260 करोड़ रुपये की धोखाधड़ी के 8,670 मामले रिपोर्ट किये गये हैं। पिछले वित्तीय वर्ष में ही 17,634 करोड़ रुपये के धोखाधड़ी के मामले प्रकाश में आये हैं और इनमें पंजाब नेशनल बैंक की वर्तमान धोखाधड़ी शामिल नहीं है। भारतीय बैंकें नान परफार्मिंग असैट के खून स्पे लथपथ गहो रही हैं जो प्रत्येक दिन बढ़ रहा है। कुल एन.पी.ए. नौ लाख करोड़ से ऊपर होने का अनुमान है। सरकार व बैंक बुरे ऋण प्राप्त करने के लिये प्रभावी कदम उठाने में असफल रही है जोकि मुख्य रूप से बड़े व्यापारिक घरानों द्वारा लिया गया है। पिछले पाँच वर्षों में सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की बैंकों द्वारा बुरे ऋणों के 2.49 लाख करोड़ रुपये बटटे-खाते में डाल दिये गये हैं और अकेले पिछले वित्त वर्ष में ही बटटे खाते में डाली गई धनराशि 81,683 करोड़ रुपये की बड़ी धन राशि थी।

भारत आज क्रोनी कैपीटलिज्म की सबसे बुरी स्थिति को अनुभव कर रहा है। अमित शाह के बेटे जय अमितभाई शाह का ऊपर उठना क्रोनी कैपीटलिज्म का उदाहरण है। द वायर ने यह रिपोर्ट दी थी कि शाह टेम्पिल एण्टरप्राइजेज नामक फर्म का मूल्य 16000 गुना बढ़कर 50000 रुपये से 80.5 करोड़ रुपये हो गया। मोदी सरकार ने आरोपो? की जांच करने से मना कर दिया और इस आश्चर्यजनक उत्थान का कारण व्यापार की वैधता को बताया।

मोदी सरकार पारदर्शी व साफ सुथरी सरकार प्रदान करने के वादे के साथ सत्ता में आयी थी। प्रधानमंत्री का प्रभावशाली नारा ?ना खाऊंगा ना खाने दूँगा? एक बड़े चुनावी जुमले जैसा लगता है। सरकार भ्रष्टाचार रोकने में असफल हो गई है। यह जनता को राफेल सौदे के बारे में बताने से मना करती है। यह ललित मोदी, विजय माल्या, और नीरव मोदी को देश छोड़ने से रोकने में असफल रही है। सरकार व्यापम स्कैम को स्वीकार करने और महाराष्ट्र व राजस्थान में ऊँचे स्तरों पर भ्रष्टाचार को स्वीकार करने से भी मना करती है। स्थिति वास्तव में दुर्गन्ध-युक्त है।

लूटा गया धन इस देश की जनता का है। कोई भी सरकार जनता के प्रति जवाबदेह होती है। प्रधानमंत्री को अपनी चुप्पी तोड़नी चाहिये। भारत के आम नागरिक इस भारी लूट को चुपचाप नहीं देख सकते। उन्हें आन्दोलित होना चाहिये व सरकार से जबाव माँगना चाहिये। इस मुद्दे से ध्यान हटाने के लिये विभाजनकारी व साम्प्रदायिक आग उगलने के किसी भी प्रयास को ध्वस्त किया जाना चाहिये। आज यह प्रत्येक भारतीय नागरिक का राष्ट्रीय कर्तव्य हो जाता है कि वह क्रोनी कैपीटलिज्म व नव-उदारवाद के विरुद्ध संघर्ष करे।

AIIEA HOLDS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE MANAGING DIRECTOR, LIC

A delegation of AIIEA comprising of Coms Amanulla Khan, President, V.Ramesh, General Secretary and H.I.Bhat, Joint Secretary visited the Central Office of LIC on 7th February 2018 and held discussions with Shri Hemant Bhargava, MD and Shri Sharad Shrivastava, ED (P). Shri G.S. Wanwar, Chief (P) was also present.

The delegation expressed concerns over certain policies which have the potential to impact the functioning and future of LIC and stressed upon the need to work together to meet the present day challenging environment. The AIIEA also expressed its dissatisfaction over not implementing some commitments made during the last wage revision talks. The Managing Director informed the delegation that LIC is continuously pursuing the **issue of five day week both with the Minister** and the officials of the Ministry. He also said that on the issue **of a final option on pension**, the LIC has been following up with the ministry for a favourable decision. The M.D assured the delegation that LIC will continue to pursue these issues with the ministry.

WAGE REVISION

The AIIEA pointed out that six months have elapsed since the wage revision became due and the submission of the charter for upward revision but there are no indications as to when the discussions on this very important issue would commence. The LIC has been performing impressively despite adverse market and economic conditions and therefore there should not be any delay on meeting the legitimate aspirations of the employees. The M.D said that the charters submitted have been analysed and the copies have also been sent to the Government and efforts are being made to begin the process of negotiations soon.

RECRUITMENT

Referring to the discussions AIIEA had on this issue with the Chairman, the delegation wanted to know the progress. The AIIEA stressed the importance of recruitment to adequately staff the offices to meet the increasing service expectations of the policyholders. Agreeing with the concern of AIIEA, the MD informed that the administration is studying the staff

requirement and necessary steps towards recruitment would be taken thereafter.

Welcoming this stand, the AIIEA pointed out that LIC cannot be in ever legal agitation mode on the disputes raised relating to recruitment. A judgement of the Court in one case should be made applicable to all similarly placed employees to avoid continuous litigations. We informed the MD that LIC had recruited employees through Employment Exchanges on temporary basis. These employees fulfilled all conditions of recruitment. These temporary appointments continued and are continuing for more than a decade. The Supreme Court directed LIC for absorption of such employees on a batch of petitions as a result of which 98 such temporary employees were recruited. There are around 170 similarly placed employees and it is only fair to extend the benefit of this judgement to such employees. The M.D assured to look into our suggestion. We also said instead of prolonging the legal battle on CGIT issue, the LIC must work to bring this issue to a close accepting in true spirit the judgement of the Supreme Court.

Ex-Servicemen Fixation

We strongly contested the action of LIC to refix the salaries of Ex-Servicemen appointed by LIC and effect recoveries on the basis of a circular issued by the Finance Ministry. We pointed out that the terms of the employment contract cannot be altered from a retrospective date. It is unfair and also bad in law. We suggested that the LIC should take up this issue with the Finance Ministry with all relevant facts and till then action in this regard should be kept in abeyance. The LIC agreed to take up this issue with the government and the matter needs further follow up both with LIC and on the legal front.

Mediclaim

The AIIEA demanded some improvements in the mediclaim scheme and inclusion of certain diseases. We pointed out that with upward revision of the income ceiling to determine the dependency, the eligible dependent parents and parents-in-law should

automatically be brought under the coverage of mediclaim scheme. Welcoming the increase in the basic sum assured, the AIIEA demanded that an option should be given to join the scheme to the pensioners who are not covered at present. The M.D assured to consider this suggestion.

HFL Interest Rates

We reiterated our demand that LIC should discuss with LICHFL to reduce the interest rates on housing loan in line with the rates existing in the market. We were informed that LIC is discussing this issue with LICHFL.

Education Advance

We have been demanding that Education Advance introduced as a benefit has become unattractive as interest payment does not qualify for exemption under Section 80 (E)

of the Income Tax Act. We pointed out that the Oriental Insurance Company has found a method to overcome this problem and on the basis of this LIC should once again take up the issue with IT authorities. The M.D said they will consult the Oriental Insurance Company on this issue and take up the matter with the IT authorities.

The delegation also discussed the issues relating to compassionate appointments with a special reference to the pending cases of some RPT employees dying in harness. We also pointed out that a large number of employees could not qualify for PLI for the financial year 2016-17 and therefore, the LIC Board should be approached for an ex-gratia payment on corporate level.

AIIEA writes to Finance Minister “Create a single public sector General Insurance company”

AIIEA , while welcoming the announcement made in the budget speech of proposed merger of three Public Sector General Insurance Companies, namely, National Insurance Company Ltd. United India Insurance Company Ltd. Oriental Insurance Company Ltd., has requested the Finance Minister to take a holistic view and create a single public sector Insurance company by including the New India Assurance Company also in the planned merger. AIIEA has also recorded its disagreement with the proposal to list the consolidated entity in the market.

AIIEA’S letter dated February 9, 2018 addressed to Finance Minister is given below :

We welcome the announcement made during your Budget Speech on February 1, 2018 on the merger of the three public sector general insurance companies named above. Our Association has been advocating the consolidation of public sector general insurance industry for the past several years. Our demand was on sound economic reasons as also the necessity to create a monolithic institution on the lines of LIC to meet the present day challenges. We also hold a firm opinion that a single public sector unit in the general insurance industry would be best suited to carry out the social obligations and responsibilities expected of a State undertaking. Hence we request you to take a holistic view and create a single public sector Insurance company by including the New India Assurance Company also in the planned merger.

While appreciating the proposal for merger,

we disagree with the proposal to list the consolidated entity in the market. The public sector general insurance industry has been making significant contribution to the national development; it is adequately capitalised and is capable of meeting the need for additional capital if required through generation of internal resources. We, therefore, request you to reconsider the decision of listing the public sector general insurance company.

We at present are not aware of the roadmap for the proposed merger. The merger is not just the physical amalgamation of the companies but it also involves the integration of human resources. As stakeholders in these companies, the employees legitimately expect some consultation with their representative trade unions in this process. We, therefore, request you to advise the concerned to hold consultations with the trade unions on this very important issue.

Meeting of AIIEA delegation with GIPSA and OIC officials and subsequent developments

A delegation of AIIEA comprising Coms. K. V. V. S. N. Raju, Vice President, AIIEA, Sanjay Jha, Secretary, Standing Committee (Gen. Ins.) and Reena Mishra, General Secretary, NZGIEU met the officials of GIPSA and OIC at New Delhi on 09/02/2018 and discussed various issues relating to the industry as well as employees' benefits. The matters deliberated upon and subsequent developments are furnished below:

1. Proposed merger of three PSGI Companies

On our raising the issue of Roadmap on merger three PSGI Companies, as proposed by the FM in his Budget Speech, both the GIPSA and Oriental officials informed that same might be discussed in the meeting with Ministry officials expected to be held soon. We demanded that any plan in such direction should be finalised only after consultations with the Trade Unions and Associations. As per the reports appearing in Newspapers, the said meeting is scheduled on 16th February, 2018. We are keeping track on the developments. We have already made our position clear through our letter addressed to the FM (Circulated vide SC Circular no. 03/2018).

2. Another Option for Pension

The GIPSA informed us that they were relentlessly pursuing with the Ministry and had submitted all the relevant documents with them. However, Ministry was yet to give its nod on the issue.

3. Improvements in Staff Group Mediclaim Policy

We put forth the following demands on this issue:-

- i) To increase the eligible some assured from Rs. 3/4/6 lakhs. The same has been increased by LIC to Rs.5/ 6/10 lacs.
- ii) To provide 100% subsidy upto the increased eligible sum assured (as against 75% now provided).

- iii) Expenses Relating to Diagnostic Tests without Hospitalisation:

The Following Diagnostic Tests without hospitalization may be covered:

MRI charges, CT Scan Charges, Sonography, Biopsy, TMT, Echo Test, Gastroscopy, Colonoscopy, EEG, EMG, HMT, PAP, Smear Test, PSA, Mammography, PET Scanning etc.

These Tests without hospitalization are covered for LIC Employees / Retirees in the GMC Policy issued by New India Assurance Co. Ltd. By treating these tests outside Hospitalisation, the unnecessary Hospitalisation expenses will be reduced to a considerable extent.

- iv) (a) To remove cap on ICU & room rent charges; (b) to remove limit for maternity cover or to enhance the limit to Rs.1 lakh; (c) restoration of coverage for psychiatric disorders, psychosomatic disease, use or misuse of drugs, etc; (d) coverage for all day-care procedures.
 - v) For retirees, the premium slab should be frozen at the level of retirement (i.e to apply premium slab applicable to 55-65 yrs).
 - vi) To ensure hassle-free cashless facility in all centres, more number of reputed hospitals should be brought under network. Special efforts are needed in North Eastern States.
 - vii) **Outside the purview of GMC:**
 - (a) Provision for health care check up – preventive health care. This will reduce the incidence of Hospitalisation expenses and thus savings for the Co. Such provision is available in LIC.
 - (b) To extend lumpsum medical benefit & CMD's exgratia for high cost treatments to retirees as well.
 - viii) To hold the assured discussion for review of GMC for further improvements.
- The CE, GIPSA informed that they were

assessing the performance of the policy on the basis of Claim statistics and would try to incorporate the improvements as much as possible. On our demand for the sharing of Claim statistics and other relevant details with us, the CE replied in affirmative. We have also sent the related papers of LIC of India to them subsequently through mail.

4. Ex- gratia (in lieu of Bonus) for the year 2016-17

The GIPSA informed us that they had already submitted all the papers with recommendations to the Ministry on 7th February, 2018 and were awaiting its response.

5. One time Special Promotion Exercise for Sub Staff/ FTS/ Drivers and RCs to the cadre of Assistant

The CE informed that the decision regarding the above was taken in the GM (P) meeting of GIPSA and the Companies were appropriately advised to initiate the same. The DGM (P) of OIC intimated that they had started the process. By now, you have come to know that UII has also decided to conduct the same and the notification is expected to be issued in few days. We have already represented with the New India to expedite on the matter. Further persuasion will be continued.

6. Improvements in the scheme of Vehicle Advance

On our reminding them on improvements in Vehicle Advance scheme, the VP, GIPSA informed us that the same was being cleared. Subsequently, we have come to know about the improvements. While our demand for increase in vehicle advance to Rs. 75000/- and 100% financing up to the limit have been accepted, we would continue to take up on the imposition of a steep 9% ROI on advance above Rs.50000/- as well as relaxation in eligibility criteria and number of times for availing the advance.

7. Recruitment in the cadre of class III and IV

i) We asked the GIPSA as well as the Oriental to lift embargo on recruitment of Class IV employees. Both of them assured us to take up the matter with the appropriate authority.

ii) The Oriental informed us that the process of recruitment of Assistants was going to start very shortly.

8. Compassionate Appointments

The GIPSA informed us that the amended uniform guidelines for appointments on Compassionate grounds were finalised and awaiting approval of Governing Board, GIPSA. We reiterated our demand for expediting the same and incorporation of relaxed qualification norms, as is done in LIC. We have sent the relevant papers of LIC for their ready reference.

9. GTIS and introduction of another Group Insurance Scheme

We had already given our opinion on GTIS for all the employees, through our earlier mail. We asked GIPSA to expedite its implementation. We also demanded that with discontinuation of GSLI, a new Group Insurance Scheme should be introduced on similar lines, as per LIC. GIPSA assured us to take up with LIC and revert to us.

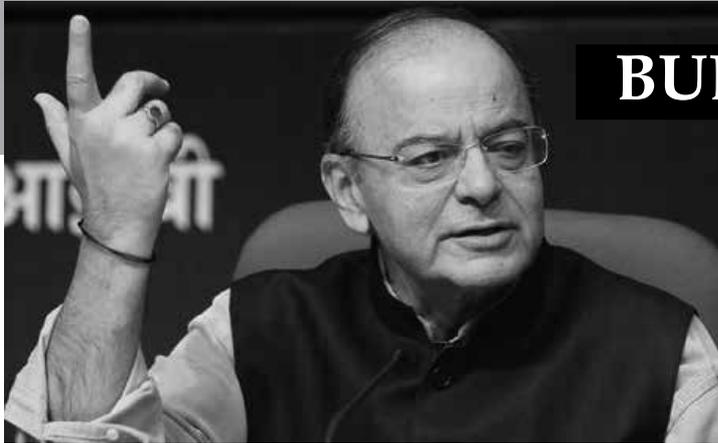
10. Issues relating to Ex- Servicemen

We demanded the GIPSA to introduce a uniform guideline for pay fixation of Ex-Servicemen and re look into the issues of their postings, transfers and promotional eligibility. GIPSA assured us to take up with appropriate authorities on the same and take due steps.

Apart from the above, specific issues of employees were taken up with Oriental officials, which have been communicated to the units concerned.

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BUDGET 2018-19:

No money Where the Mouth is

Prof. C. P. Chandrashekar

Billed as the last full budget of this second NDA government, Budget 2018 was not expected to surprise. Its primary thrust had to be a show of concern for the large mass of the deprived in India, with some focus on the agricultural sector which by all accounts has been neglected and allowed to languish over the last four years. There were therefore three questions that the budget was expected to answer.

First, to what extent would pre-election imperatives be addressed with mere rhetoric and window-dressing, rather than actual measures backed with financing aimed at the neglected and marginalised sections of India society.

Second, what means – actual revenue mobilisation and manipulation of figures – would the Finance Minister adopt to achieve his irrational fiscal deficit targets, if he manages that at all.

And, finally, with intense media attention making the Budget the single most important propaganda pamphlet issued every year, how would the government use it to establish the Prime Minister's claim that he is the most passionate "reformer" of all time.

On the first count, the conclusion is clear: this budget does not put money where its mouth is. As expected the budget made noises regarding special policies for the rural sector, small industry and the marginalised. But what is striking is the absence of a clear commitment of budgetary resources (as opposed to credit and other off-budget funding) to back up

these claims. In the case of agriculture, for example, the allocation for the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation And Farmers' Welfare has been increase by just 7 per cent in Budget 2018-19 as compared to the revised estimate for 2017-18. That would be a negligible increase in real terms. Rather than significantly increasing budgetary support for a sector in crisis, which forced some state governments to accede to demands for farm loan waivers, the Finance Minister has merely promised to increase the flow of institutional credit to agriculture from Rs. 10 lakh crore to Rs. 11 lakh crore. That is not his money, but that of banks that are also reeling under a crisis. The only pro-farmer measure the Finance Minister can celebrate is the much-belated plan to implement the long pending demand from the farming committee that the M S Swaminathan Commission recommendation that floor for the Minimum Support Price for crops should be set at 1.5 times cost. But whether adequate amounts of different crops would be procured at these prices is yet to be seen.

This absence of allocations to back claims of devoting additional resources to uplift the poor and the marginalised is visible in other areas as well. The Finance Minister announced the launch of the "world's largest government funded health care programme" through a flagship National Health Protection Scheme that would "cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage upto 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and

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tertiary care hospitalization.” Strangely not a single rupee has been set aside in the budget for this purpose. Nor has there been any information provided on whether discussions have been held with insurance companies who will implement the scheme and the premia they would charge. Once that is done, the whole scheme may be quietly dropped for lack of resources.

On another front, the budget speech talks of fulfilling the dreams of the poor to own their own house. Yet, the nominal allocation for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana has been increased by just 3 per cent. Finally, allocations for the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Budget 2018-19 have been kept at the same level of Rs. 55,000 crore as provided for in the budget for 2017-18. It is another matter that the full amount was not even spent in 2017-18, despite the overwhelming evidence that the demand for jobs in the scheme was large and wages are in arrears.

Despite efforts of this kind to keep expenses down, the Finance Minister has not been able to achieve his irrational fiscal deficit target of 3.2 per cent. The deficit for 2017-18 is (optimistically) estimated at 3.5 per cent and that for 2018-19 has been set at 3.3 per cent. What is noteworthy, is that the deficit this fiscal year has overshoot the target despite the facts that (i) finance ministry mandarins have kept some big-ticket spending items (such as expenditure on the recapitalisation of banks) outside the budget through a sleight of hand; and (ii) the government received Rs. 36,915 crore from ONGC for the its 51.1 per cent stake

in HPCL one day before the budget (which takes estimated receipts from disinvestment to Rs. 1,00,000 crore as against the budgeted Rs.72,500 crore).

Clearly the shortfall in GST receipts, which had taken the fiscal deficit figure to 112 per cent of that budgeted by November 2017, played a role here. What that shows is that neither is the GST delivering on its promises nor is the economy doing well from a revenue buoyancy point of view. This seems to have pushed the government into adopting what might prove to be the one saving grace in the budget – the restoration of a tax on capital gains made on investments of more than a year in stock markets.

The Long-term Capital Gains Tax that had been abolished in 2003-04 has been reinstated at 10 per cent for gains exceeding Rs. 1 lakh, and the short term capital gains tax set at 15 per cent. But if the stock market reacts adversely to this move, as it is likely to, a reversal of this before the budget is passed is a strong possibility. If it is not, the government’s image of being “reformist” will take a hit among foreign investors, despite all the tiresome talk about India’s achievements with respect to “the ease of doing business” in the Finance Minister’s speech.

Overall, the Finance Minister was left with the option of engaging in big talk while attempting to conceal the fact that he had not been able to offer much in what is a pre-election year. Unfortunately for him, the minister is not even a good orator.

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Cartoon courtesy: Deshabhimani

BUDGET 2018-19:

Hoodwinking the Masses

Santosh Kumar Mohapatra



Cartoon courtesy: Sandeep Adhwaryu.
Times of India

On February 1, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presented his government's fifth and last full Budget in Parliament amid subdued economic growth, escalating fiscal stress and rising agrarian distress. In order to derive political mileage especially in forth-coming assemblies' election in eight states, a lot of fanfare is being created by packaging the budget as pro-poor, pro-farmer. Mass hysteria has been created about expenditures on agriculture, rural development and national health care scheme to hoodwink masses. However, deciphering the budget reveals that it is anti-people, anti-worker.

HYPOCRISY OF BIGGEST HEALTH SCHEMES

The finance minister made a pitch to focus on health. One of the pompous announcements in this Budget was that of the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) which is dubbed as "World's Largest Health Programme" and nicknamed as "Modicare" like "Obamacare". The NHPS aims to provide medical cover of Rs 5 lakh to over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families. In reality, the health care scheme is a mere repackaging of the existing one. This new scheme is the fourth incarnation of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY). In 2016-2017, RSBY was renamed the Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (RSSY) and in 2017-2018, this was renamed as the NHPS. While, the RSBY offered Rs 30,000 to poor families, the NHPS had agreed to provide Rs 1 lakh per family. By any conservative estimates, if Rs 3,000 per household to be paid as premium per year for a cover of Rs 5 lakh, the total budgetary outlay could be Rs 30,000 crore. But no additional allocations have been budgeted except Rs 2,000 crore being

allocated to existing healthcare insurance scheme RSBY.

The biggest beneficiaries will be the private hospitals and insurance companies but not common people. The glaring example is Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), which replaced the previous National Agricultural Insurance Scheme in April 2016. According to Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), the Modi government's much-touted crop insurance scheme has showed that insurers gained nearly Rs 10,000 crore in gross profit during the last kharif season, from June to November 2016. However, it settled less than a third of the crop-loss claims filed till early part of year 2017. The hidden design of forcing States to share 40% expenditure will not be materialized as neither State governments were consulted before declaring this schemes not their finances permit this.

Any health insurance scheme is no substitute for public health care or health expenditure. The budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is at Rs 54,600 crore compared to last year's expenditure of Rs 53,294 crore, an effective decline in real terms if one were to factor in expected inflation. These allocations are nowhere near the prescribed expenditure of at least 1% of gross domestic product (GDP) by the centre and 1.5% of GDP by the states for health as per the National Health Policy 2017. The total central health expenditure is projected to decline from 0.32% of the GDP in 2017-18 to 0.29% in 2018-19. India's public health budget (centre plus states) is nearly 1.4% of GDP which is abysmal when compared with US (8.3%), China

Prime Minister has described this budget as an example of not only ease of doing business but also as one of ease of living. But while India improves its position in ease of doing business, declines in most of international indices on human development which reflects poor and wretched condition of masses. In sum, this budget is a distinctive propaganda packaging exercise to hoodwink the masses.

(3.1%), South Africa (8.7%), OECD members (7.7%) and World average of 5.95%. India's health care system is one of the most privatized in World and around 70 % of health expenditure is borne by patients which drag around 5 crore people to poverty trap every year.

ILLUSION OF PRO-FARMER

The Finance Minister promised to provide minimum support price (MSP) for all kharif crops at least at one and half times of their production and went on to add that this decision will prove to be a "historic" step towards doubling the income of farmers and fulfillment of election promise of 2014. However, the finance minister misled the country that the government had already declared such an MSP for a majority of Rabi crops. In reality, the MSP for crops is not increasing as necessary. This is because there is a chasm between assurances and acts of the government. The pricing structure is so designed to keep the farmers deprived of their rightful income. Even costs of production are decided much below than what it should be. For the majority of the crops the MSP fixed was lower than the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices' own calculation of cost of production.

The Commission for Agricultural Costs declares the MSP for eligible crops and Prices (CACP) which is known as comprehensive cost (C2). This is summation of A2 (actual paid out cost, which involves costs of fertilizers, pesticides, machinery, seeds etc), FL (value of family labour) and imputed rent and interest on owned land and capital. Swaminathan Commission report had categorically stated that farmers should get an MSP, which is 50% higher than the comprehensive cost of production (i.e., which

is C2, not A2+FL). Present Modi government is talking only operational costs A2+FL not C2 as demanded by farmer's organization. This tantamounts to deceiving farmers. Besides, there is a need to add adverse impact of inflation, costs of marketing, ware housing, transportation and such other things to C2, which is not being done.

Further, the BJP-led government has swindled the farming community and rural poor by refusing to announce any policy for liberation from indebtedness for the peasantry. There is nothing in the budget for the agricultural workers and rural poor who are plagued by falling incomes and declining purchasing power. No increase in MGNREGA allocation has been made. Rs 55,000 crore allotted is equal to the revised estimate for 2017-18. Even by conservative estimates, more than Rs 80,000 crore will be required for proper implementation of the programme.

BURDENING MASSES

The tax revenue collection's growth has fallen short of the targets nullifying the arguments that demonitisation and GST have led to rise of taxes. Budget does not address how to recover more than seven lakh crore locked in tax dispute. On the contrary, government increasingly relies on indirect taxes for generating resources, which are a saddle on the common people. In past, taking the advantage of declining international crude oil prices, the government has imposed burden on masses by constantly raising the excise duty on petrol and diesel. In fact, the proportion of the direct taxes in gross central taxes budgeted to come down from 51.6% to 50.6%.

The earmarked expenditures in Union Budget 2018-19 fall far short of the government's pompous claims. This budget is contractionary as total expenditure in 2018-19 is estimated to grow by 10.1%, less than the 11.5% of nominal GDP growth (real GDP plus inflation) as envisaged in 2018-19. This is even slower than the 12.3% by which the estimated total expenditure for 2017-18 is expected to grow. The government expenditure as proportionate of GDP has now declined further from 13.2% to 13%. The expenditure on agriculture and rural development, as percentage of GDP, is reduced from 1.15 % to 1.08%; expenditure on education has fallen from 0.49% of the GDP to 0.45%; the gender budget has fallen from 0.68% to 0.65% of GDP.

One of the most serious issues in Indian

education is the high dropout rate as students' transit from primary to senior secondary levels. But, allocation for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (elementary education) stands at Rs.26,129 crore in this Budget as against Rs.26,608 crore in 2013-14. Despite tall claims by the Modi government of standing strongly in support of Dalit and Adivasi rights, they have raw deal. Allocation for the Schedule Caste Sub-Plan (SCP) this year is just 2.32% of total allocations. It should have been at least 16.6%. Similarly, allocation for adivasis under Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) this year is just 1.6% of total allocations. It should have been at least 8.6%. The government has shown total insensitivity towards the needs of women. There has also been a decline from 5.2 % to 4.9% in terms of the proportion of the gender budget to the total budgetary expenditure between 2017-18 (revised estimates) and the proposed budget for 2018-2019.

DECIMATING MIDDLE AND SALARIED CLASS

The salaried sections have been left high and dry. In view of inflation, there was need for rise in exemption limit or re-introduction of standard deduction by minimum Rs1 lakh. The standard deduction of Rs 40,000 is just to mislead salaried classes as existing exemptions for transport allowances of Rs 34,200 and medical reimbursements of Rs15,000 has been taken away. Proposal to raise educational and health cess from 3% to 4% will further add to the burden of honest tax payers.

The Budget 2018 has proposed that if someone is laid off and receives a compensation will now be taxed as "Other Income". Earlier, it was mostly considered as a non-taxable capital receipt. By contrast, the budget extend concession to business houses. On the plea of supporting micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs), finance minister reduced corporate tax rate from 30% to 25% to companies having Rs 250 crore annual turnovers. Earlier, it was available to companies with turnover up to Rs50 crore. The tragedy is that while the burden on corporate houses has been reduced further by Rs 7,000 crore, budget provides no relief to suffering millions reeling under post-GST indirect tax burden.

SELLING THE NATIONAL ASSETS

The fiscal deficit (excess of expenditure over non-borrowed receipts) has been revised

upward to 3.5% for 2017-18 as against target of 3.2% and target for 2018-2019 is fixed at 3.3% against proposed 3%. However, fiscal deficit is not a problem, if money is spent in creating assets. But the revenue deficit (excess of revenue expenditure over revenue receipts) will be a high 2.2% of GDP, nowhere near the promised zero. This means the quality of government borrowing has deteriorated as too much is going for non-productive purposes.

Finance Minister has set the disinvestment target of Rs.80,000 crore for 2018-19. What is worrisome is that the government has begun strategic disinvestment in 24 public sector units (PSUs), including national carrier Air India. Strategic disinvestment means selling controlling share to a person or company, which carry ownership. As part of divestment of stake in its general insurance firms, the government diluted stakes in New India Assurance Co Ltd and General Insurance Corporation of India last year. Three public sector general insurance companies – National Insurance Co Ltd, United India Assurance Co Ltd and Oriental India Insurance Company – will be merged into a single insurance company and be subsequently listed (disinvested). What is preposterous is that Oil and Natural Gas Corp will acquire the government's entire 51.11% stake in Hindustan Petroleum for about Rs 37,000 crore. The disinvestment agenda is just aimed to privatize the public sector and resources generated are to be utilized to reduce the fiscal deficit. By disinvestment, not only national assets are sold to private individuals but future streams of dividend income dwindle with decline of government shares.

CONCLUSION

Prime Minister Modi has described this budget as an example of not only ease of doing business but also as one of ease of living. But While India improves its position in ease of doing business, declines in most of international indices which reflects poor and wretched condition of masses. In sum, this budget is a distinctive propaganda packaging exercise by to hoodwink the masses. The major challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, farmers' suicide, rising NPAs, price rise, erosion of purchasing power and slowdown of economy remain unaddressed.

विकास के नाम पर लूट

रामचंद्र शर्मा

नरेन्द्र मोदी के प्रधानमंत्री काल में जनता की तकलीफों और पीड़ाओं को सुनने की बजाय दर्द की अभिव्यक्ति करने वाले को ही आरोपित कर दिया जाता है। उनकी जनविरोधी विभाजनकारी नीतियों का विरोध करने पर जहां देशद्रोही का तमागा मिलता है तो वहीं पूंजीपरस्त लूट और महंगाई का विरोध करने पर विकास विरोधी ठहरा दिया जाता है। न कहीं पीड़ा की सुनवाई होती है और न ही कहीं समाधान मिलता है। चैतरफा लूट और बेकारी की षिकार जनता के नागरिक अधिकार बेमानी हो गये हैं। अगर कहीं कुछ मिलता है तो कभी-कभार पड़नेवाली न्यायालय की फटकार से भले मिल जाये। न्यायालय भी आखिर कितना देखे, प्रशासन चलाना तो उसका काम नहीं। उसके पास तो पहले ही काम का बोझ इतना है कि निपटाये न बने। न्यायाधीश हो या स्टाफ उसके लिए आखिर आर्थिक प्रबन्धन तो सरकार को ही करना है।

लूट की बनी व्यवस्था में अब तो खुद सरकार ही लूटेरी है और नोटबंदी के दौर में हुई संस्थागत लूट की मारी आम जनता है। उसके बाद 'एक देश एक टैक्स' का नारा देकर आया वस्तु और सेवा कर सबको निचोड़ रहा है। यहा भी देखिये एक देश एक टैक्स के इस नारे में भी कितना झोल है। पेट्रोल, डीजल, गैस आदि तो उससे बाहर हैं और वस्तु व सेवा कर की भी कोई एक दर नहीं बल्कि कई स्लैब हैं। जो वस्तुएं और सेवाएं पहले कर की श्रेणी से बाहर थी, अब वो इस जी.एस.टी की जद में आ गई हैं। कबाड़ तक को नही बक्सा गया है। अब उस पर भी टैक्स है। लेकिन पेट्रोल, डीजल, गैस आदि आखिर क्यों इससे बाहर हैं? इसमें भी लूट का एक बड़ा गणित है। क्योंकि जी.एस.टी. में अधिकतम टैक्स की दर 28 प्रतिशत अधिकतम है। जबकि पेट्रोल, डीजल, गैस आदि पर तो केन्द्र और राज्य सरकारें सौ प्रतिशत से भी ज्यादा कर वसूली रही हैं। अपने आप को नसीबवाला घोषित करने वाले मोदी की सरकार के तीन साल के शासन में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर कच्चे तेल की कीमतें लगातार गिरी हैं और कच्चा तेल 45 प्रतिशत तक सस्ता हुआ है परन्तु हमारे देश में इस तेल पर लगने वाला कर 126 प्रतिशत तक बढ़ गया है।

परिणामस्वरूप देश में पेट्रोल के दाम 80 रू. लीटर से ऊपर जा चुके हैं। 16 जून से पेट्रोल और डीजल के दाम रोजाना तय किये जा रहे हैं। जबसे ये रोजाना के भाव शुरू हुए हैं, बढ़ते ही जा रहे हैं और कोई जनप्रतिरोध भी उभर नहीं पा रहा है। जून से अगस्त



Cartoon courtesy: Shekhar Guerara

तक के अढ़ाई महीने में ही पेट्रोल आदि के भाव 7 प्रतिशत से बढ़ चुके हैं। पहले भाव बढ़ते घटते थे, तो समाचार आते थे, कि आज रात 12 बजे से इनके भाव ये रहेंगे। परन्तु अब तो पेट्रोल भरवाने पर ही पता चलता है कि कितनी चोट लगी है। यह चोट रोज गहरी होती जा रही है। अगस्त 2014 में कू?ड यानि कच्चे तेल का भाव 6291.91रू. प्रति बैरल था जो अब 3424.94 रू. प्रति बैरल है। एक बैरल में 159 लीटर होता है इस हिसाब से एक लीटर तेल अगस्त 2014 में 39 रू. का पड़ता था वो अब आधे के करीब घटकर 21रू. पर आ गया है। फिर भी आम जन को मिलनेवाला पेट्रोल का भाव 79.41 रू. प्रति लीटर है। यानि लागत से 4 गुणा ज्यादा की कीमत आम जनता चुका रही है। माह सितम्बर 2019 में मुबई में यह 80 रू. पार कर गया। हमारा पड़ोसी पाकिस्तान 43 रू. तो श्रीलंका हमसे खरीदकर 50 रू. प्रति लीटर पेट्रोल बेच रहा है। अभी दो सप्ताह पूर्व केन्द्र ने ऊंट के मुंह में जीरे समान मामूली 2रू. का उत्पाद शुल्क कम किया है। जो कतई न्यायसंगत नहीं है। अभी यह जयपुर में 72 रू. के लगाभग मिल रहा है। पेट्रोलियम मंत्री धमेंद्र प्रधान ने राज्यों से वैट आदि कर घटने की बात कही है। कुछ राज्यों ने केन्द्र की तरह मामूली से घटाये भी हैं।

अब एक दूसरा उदाहरण देखिये वर्ष 2008 में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर कच्चे तेल के दाम अब तक की सबसे बड़ी ऊंचाई 146 डॉलर प्रति बैरल पर पहुंच गये थे। जो भारतीय मुद्रा में प्रति लीटर 62.4रू. बैठता था। शोधन खर्च, कर आदि के बाद भी यह अधिकतम 77रू. से आगे नहीं बढ़ पाया था। आपको ध्यान होगा कि उस समय वामदलों के तीखे प्रतिरोध के चलते केन्द्र और राज्य दोनों ही सरकारों ने अपने उत्पाद शुल्क सहित अन्य कर आदि घटा दिये थे। बाद अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भाव घटने पर इसका लाभ आमजनता को मिलने लगा था परन्तु मोदी सरकार के आने के बाद यह स्थिति बदल

गई। उसने कर की दरें बढ़ाना शुरू कर दी जो अब 126 प्रतिशत तक बढ़ गई है। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर क़ूड की एक-तिहाई से भी ज्यादा कीमतें गिर जाने का फायदा जनता को नहीं दे, तेल कम्पनियों के साथ अपना राजस्व बढ़ा रही है। सरकार ने अपना हस्तक्षेप खत्म कर जब तेल के दाम सीधे बाजार के हाथ में छोड़े थे, तब यही कहा था कि अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय दामों में जो भी उतार-चढ़ाव होगा, तेल के दाम उसी हिसाब से उपभोक्ताओं से वसूले जायेंगे। दाम बढ़ने पर तो हाथों दाम बढ़ा दिये जाते हैं परन्तु घटने पर उनका लाभ उपभोक्ता को नहीं मिलता। इसमें तेल कम्पनियों और सरकार दोनों की मिलीभगत है। पेट्रोलियम मंत्री धर्मेन्द्र प्रधान से जब यह सवाल पूछा गया कि सरकार अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर क़ूड की घटी कीमतों का लाभ उपभोक्ताओं को क्यों नहीं दे रही है और वह तेल पर से कर आदि कम क्यों नहीं कर रही है, तो उनका जवाब था कि अगर हमने कर कम किये तो सरकार के पास जो राजस्व आ रहा है, उसमें कमी आ जायेगी। राजस्व कम आने से विकास रुक जायेगा। सड़कों का काम रुक जायेगा। यानि कर घटना विकासविरोधी सिद्ध होगा। जबकि सड़क के नाम से उपकर अलग से जोड़कर लेते हैं। धर्मेन्द्र प्रधान से दो कदम और आगे जाकर मोदी सरकार में एक नौकरशाह से नये-नये मंत्री बने महाशय ने तो यह कह डाला कि कार बाइक वाले भूखे थोड़े मर रहे हैं। देश की 30 प्रतिशत आबादी भूखी सोती है, जो राजस्व मिलेगा, उससे उनका पेट जो भरना है। हम कोई चोरी थोड़े ही कर रहे हैं। है न गजब का जवाब! चोरी और ऊपर से सीनाजोरी। विकास के नाम पर लूट की सरकार को दो पूरी छूट। जनता का क्या, आदत है रोने की, रोके रह जावेगी..!

सरकार अपनी नाकामियों और कमजोरियों को छुपाने की लाख कोशिशें करे निरन्तर बिगड़ते आर्थिक हालात उसे चौराहे पर ले ही आते हैं। पहले नोटबंदी की सनक की शिकार हुई देश की आर्थिक तबाही, पटरी आ ही नहीं पाई थी, कि एक और तुगलकी सनक से आनन-फानन में लागू हुई जी.एस.टी से अर्थव्यवस्था और भी बड़े गढ़े में धकेल दी गई है। विमुद्रीकरण के समय प्रख्यात जानेमाने अर्थशास्त्रियों की ओर से दी गई चेतावनियां सच होकर सामने हैं। भारतीय रिजर्व

बैंक की वार्षिक रिपोर्ट के सामने आये आकलन हो या हर तिमाही में आनेवाली विकास दर की रिपोर्टें, सब अर्थव्यवस्था की दुर्दशा की कहानी कह रही हैं। इस वर्ष की पहली तिमाही में ही 2.2 प्रतिशत से विकास दर गिरी है। औद्योगिक विकास दर पिछले 5 साल में सबसे निचले स्तर पर है। व्यापार घाटे के कारण चालू खाते का घाटा बढ़ गया है और सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के 2.4 प्रतिशत यानि 14.3 अरब डॉलर तक पहुंच गया है। कृषि संकट का कोई हल खोजने में सरकार नाकाम रही है। आई.टी. क्षेत्र में रोजगार मिलने के उलट छंटनी शुरू हो गई है। भू-भवन सम्पदा क्षेत्र भी औंधे मुंह पड़ा हुआ है। न कालाधन आया और न ही युवाओं को रोजगार मिला बल्कि जो लोग कहीं काम धंधों में लगे हुए थे, उन्हें पहले नोटबंदी और अब जी.एस.टी. ने सड़क पर ला दिया है। 80 प्रतिशत इंजीनियर बन निकले नौजवानों को रोजगार नहीं मिल रहा है। यहां तक कि इस वर्ष आई.आई.टी. जैसे सुनाम संस्थानों से होनेवाले कैम्पस सलेक्शन तक नहीं हो पाये हैं। सामान्य शिक्षण संस्थानों से पासऑउटों की हालात कैसी होगी, समझ सकते हैं। हर परिवार अपने नौजवान बेटे-बेटियों को खाली हाथ देख हताश है।

सरकार चाहें जितनी ढींगें हांके, अन्दर से बेताहाशा हीली हुई है। तभी तो 19 सितम्बर 2017 को वित्तमंत्री अरूण जेटली ने केन्द्रीय मंत्री सुरेश प्रभु, पीयूष गोयल, नीति आयोग के उपाध्यक्ष राजीव कुमार, वित्त मंत्रालय और प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय के प्रमुख अधिकारियों के साथ बैठक कर हालात संभालने पर चर्चा की। राहुल गांधी की चाहे जो नाम देकर खिल्ली उड़ाई जाती रही हो परन्तु उसके उठाये जा रहे सवालियों के जवाब इनके पास नहीं हैं। उसकी यह स्वीकारोक्ति कम महत्त्वपूर्ण नहीं है कि कांग्रेस की सरकार रोजगार नहीं दे पाई, इसलिए हारी परन्तु हमसे बुरी स्थिति मोदी सरकार की है, जिसने युवाओं को नौकरियां तो दी नहीं बल्कि रोजगार के साधन ही खत्म कर दिये। युवाओं का जो गुस्सा हम पर उतरा, अब उनसे और भी बुरी हालातों पर पहुंची मोदी सरकार कैसे बच सकती है? निश्चित ही 2 करोड़ प्रतिवर्ष रोजगार देने के वादे को निभाने में नाकाम रही सरकार के प्रति जनाक्रोश बड़बोलेपन की बाड़ से रूकनेवाला नहीं है। सामाजिक परिवेश असुरक्षित हो गया है भीड़

Contd on Page 19



The increasing assaults on the livelihood of the people by the policies of this Government are turning 'Acche Din' into a nightmare. The ruling party at the Centre after making false promises, is now catering only to the Big business, MNCs and big landlords, while the issues raised by peasants, workers, women, youth, dalits, minorities are being totally ignored. There is only loot in the name of Development .



Cartoon courtesy: Satish Acharya

Why do they Love to Hate Secularism?

R. Rajesham

Anantkumar Hegde, the Union Minister of State for Employment and Skill Development recently mouthed objectionable comments on Constitution and its core values. Speaking in a caste convention in Koppal district in Karnataka, he proudly proclaimed that people have voted BJP to change the Constitution, and they are going to change the Constitution. Asking people to identify themselves with their religion and caste rather than being secular, he said "I will be happy if someone identifies himself as Muslim, Christian, Brahmin, Lingayat or Hindu. But trouble will arise if they say they are secular. Those who, without knowing about their parental blood, call themselves secular, they don't have their own identity. They don't know about their parentage.." When uproar erupted in Parliament, Mr. Hegde withdrew his comments and tendered apology.

This is not just a off the cuff remark. This is a serious thought process. The forces of hindutva want to check at regular intervals, the level to which they could inject the poisonous communal thought into the minds of general public. When knowledgeable people object, they are always ready to tender an unrepentant apology. Ministers taking oath on the Constitution and ridiculing that very constitution is possible only in Sangh politics.

On 26 January 2015, on the occasion of the very first Republic Day after Narendra Modi came to power, the government has issued an advertisement to all the

For any Indian it is painful to hear their political leaders commenting that secularists are without parentage or identity. We know that *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* ("the world is one family") was the dictum pronounced by ancient Indian sages in the *Mahopanishad*. This dictum is the basis of Indian culture and civilization for centuries.

newspapers. People were shocked to notice that in the Constitution Preamble shown in the advertisement the words "Socialism" and "Secularism" were missing. People from all walks of life registered a strong protest on this issue. The hindutvavadis argued that in the original Preamble accepted by the Constituent Assembly in 1956, the words socialism and secularism were absent and these words were inserted through a constitutional amendment by Indira Gandhi in 1976. They further argue that Babasaheb Ambedkar was against incorporating secularism in the Constitution. It is true that the words "Socialism" and "Secularism" were added in the Preamble vide 42nd constitutional amendment at a later date. But is it true that the framers of our Constitution were opposed to the idea of secularism? Is secularism alien to India and Indian ethos as alleged by the Sangh Parivar?

If we examine our Constitution we find that the very first right citizens of India are granted is the right to equality. Article 15 states that "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them... No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste,

sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction..." If this is not "secularism" then what else it is? It is true that word secularism is not included in Preamble while adopting Constitution. The framers of our Constitution were of the opinion that adding the word "secularism" is superfluous since the spirit of secularism is pervading all along the Constitution. Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Ambedkar and all the other national leaders involved in framing the constitution were unanimous on this point.

For any Indian it is painful to hear their political leaders commenting that secularists are without parentage or identity. We know that *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* ("the world is one family") was the dictum pronounced by ancient Indian sages in the *Mahopanishad*. This dictum is the basis of Indian culture and civilization for centuries. The notion that the world is one family...my family, is an integral part of the Indian ethos. The worldview that the entire world is one family and everybody should co-inhabit this world as children of God, cemented the unity of India from the beginning. This verse, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is engraved in the entrance hall of our Parliament. The Indian understanding of secularism is that it is a belief-system that all religions are equal cannot be treated alien in a land where *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is preached and practiced.



Cartoon courtesy:EP Unni, Indian Express

Ananthakumar Hegde belongs to a group that believes in enforcing on others their perverted version of Hinduism. They boastfully claim that they are the protectors of Hinduism and whatever done and uttered by them is to safeguard Hinduism. It is doubtful whether they know anything about Hinduism and Indian values. Let me ask these leaders, where did we find the phrases "Sarva Dharma Samabhavana" and "Lokaa samasthaa sukhinobhavanthu"? Are these notions offspring of Indian thought or did we borrow these things from Westerners? Sangh parivar and its leaders should realise that people holding different thoughts and practicing different religions lived together peacefully in India since time immemorial. During Ramayana age, saints Vasishta and Vishwamitra, the proponents of Vedic tradition and saint Jaabaali, who vehemently opposed Vedic tradition and advocated materialistic thought, were given equal and respectable treatment in the royal Court of King Rama.

On 27, September 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing United Nations General Assembly claimed that he came from a country which preached *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. World leaders showered encomiums on Modi for his inspiring speech. Back home in the country, his followers encourage casteist tendencies and encourage people to identify themselves with caste and religion. This is hypocrisy naked and vile.

RSS opposed Constitution of India from the beginning. They had demanded that the Constitution should be along the lines of Manusmriti. On 26th November 1949 our constituent assembly had adopted the Constitution. *Organiser*, the mouthpiece of RSS in its issue date 30th November 1949 raised objections and said "But in our constitution, there is no mention of that unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat i.e. *Manusmriti*. To this day laws as enunciated in the *Manusmriti* excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing." The rejection of the Constitution then and attacks on it now are clearly understandable.

While engaged in a relentless struggle against the British imperialism, our freedom fighters could realise the ill effects of communalism and the religious divide that paved the way for British subjugation of India. They came to the conclusion that religion should be separated from the State in order to preserve the unity of free India. In the Calcutta session of National Congress in the year 1917, Rabindranath Tagore recited the English version of his famous poem *Chitto jetha bhoyslunyo* :

*Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been
broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls...
Into that heaven of freedom,
My Father, let my country awake..*

Gurudev's poetic incantation represented the political conviction being evolved at that time. Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Azad, Ambedkar and all the leaders involved in India's struggle for independence were fully convinced that

the unifying principles of secularism can only safeguard the integrity of India.

Today the forces that did not participate in the national liberation movement and in fact supported the British Empire are vehemently attacking the Constitution on the foundation of which the Indian State is built. The recognition of plurality of religions, languages and cultures has kept the country united. The attack on the Constitution is in effect the refusal to recognize this rich diversity of India. The proponents of one language, one religion and one nation must remember what happened to Pakistan when it refused to recognize the linguistic plurality that resulted in its division and creation of Bangla Desh. We cannot allow our great country to be converted into a Hindu Pakistan. India's democracy, its secular values, its rich diversity must motivate all progressive sections to stand up and defend the Indian Constitution and its core values and beliefs.

*The author is Joint Secretary,
ICEU Karimnagar Divn*



From Page 16

विकास के नाम पर लूट

का उन्माद जिसे चाहे किसी बहाने मौत के घाट उतार देते हैं। पत्रकार गौरी लंकेश की घर में घुसकर दिनदहाड़े गोलीमार कर हत्या कर दी गई। प्रसिद्ध कवि सूर्यकांत "निराला" के पौते को सरे राह गोली मार दी गई। बेटी बचाओं का मोदी का नारा सरासर ढकोसला है। बनारस हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय की छात्रा के साथ सुरक्षाकर्मियों की उपस्थिति में छेड़खानी और अश्लील हरकतों की जाती है परन्तु प्रशासन आरोपियों पर कार्रवाई करने के बदले छात्राओं को ही ऐसे मौकों से बचने की सलाह देता है। छात्राओं इसका कड़ा प्रतिवाद किया और जिस दिन प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी बनारस दौरे पर थे "गो बैक" के नारे लगा अपना जबरदस्त रोष प्रकट किया। यहां भी उनकी पीड़ा सुनने की बजाय पुलिस ने छात्राओं पर निर्मम लाठियां भांजी।

नारा "बेटी बचाओं-बेटी पढ़ाओं" और जब पढ़नेवाली बेटियां अपनी सुरक्षा की मांग करें तो उनकी पीड़ा सुनने के बदले निर्ममता से पिटाई करती है। नाम

बड़े करम खोटे वाली यह सरकार आम आदमी की जिंदगी को दुर्भाग्य में बदलने का काम भर कर रही है। यह सरकार सिर्फ नारे गढ़ती है। अब एक नया नारा गरीब को बिजली कनेक्शन देने के लिए "सौभाग्य" गढ़ लिया है। इस नारे का हथ्र भी अन्य नारों की भांती होना तय है। दिन प्रतिदिन सरकार की नीतियों के घाव इतने गहरे होते जा रहे हैं कि अब "अच्छे दिन" की बात घाव पर नमक छिड़कने के जैसे लगती है। भाजपा ने चुनाव में जनता से झुठे वादे किये परन्तु अब एकाधिकार पूंजी, बहुराष्ट्रीय कम्पनियों, बड़े जमींदारों और बड़े व्यापारियों की पिठू बनकर रह गयी हैं। अल्पसंख्यक, दलित, छात्र, नौजवान, महिलाओं, मजदूरों और किसानों का बेइन्तहां दमन जारी है। उठाये गये सवालियों और समस्याओं का कोई समाधान नहीं है। कृषि संकट निरन्तर गहराता जा रहा है। नौजवानों को इसमें कोई भविष्य नजर नहीं आता है। न खेती में रोजगार है और न उद्योग में कोई ठोर है। मंदी और छंटनी में युवा बेकार और बेहाल है। उनका आक्रोश घना हो रहा है। परिस्थितियां बन रही है कि सरकार या तो नीतियां बदले या फिर गद्दी छोड़े। मजदुर, किसान और आमजनता के संघर्ष सघन हो रहे हैं।

DANGEROUS PERIOD

The crisis in world capitalism has encouraged fascism

Prof. Prabhat Patnaik

(Courtesy: The Telegraph -Feb 16, 2018)



For over half a century after the Second World War, fascism had ceased to be a serious political force anywhere. There were, no doubt, many authoritarian, even murderous, regimes and military dictatorships, especially in the third world, often installed through CIA-backed *coups* against progressive nationalist governments, and enjoying the tacit support of the United States of America. But these must be distinguished from fascist regimes, which rely on mass political mobilization by arousing hatred against some hapless minority. For people of my generation, and several succeeding ones, the main contest appeared to be between liberalism and socialism.

There were, I believe, two major factors behind this eclipse of fascism. One was the utter repugnance it had aroused by pushing mankind into the most devastating war in its history: fascism had become synonymous in people's minds with extreme bellicosity resulting in war. The second was the fact that the conditions of mass unemployment and destitution in which fascism had grown in the inter-war period had become history: Keynesian "demand management" under the aegis of social democracy in the advanced capitalist world had ushered in what has been called the "Golden Age of Capitalism", and *dirigisme* in the post-colonial third world had brought new hope and a better life to most people after the horrors of colonial exploitation.

It is unfashionable these days to accept the latter fact. But the Indian case itself establishes the point. Per capita annual foodgrain absorption, which was about 200 kilograms in "British India" around 1900 and had fallen to 136.8 in 1945-46, rose to about 180 by the end of the 1980s. (Since then it has fallen to about 165 now under neo-liberal 'reforms'.) Piketty and Chancel,

using Indian income tax data, estimate that the share in total income of the top 1 per cent of the population which was 21 per cent in the late 1930s had fallen to 6 per cent by the early 1980s (and has increased to 22 per cent in 2014).

Even after the triumph of neo-liberalism, which put an end to *dirigisme* both in the advanced and the underdeveloped world, the formation of the 'dotcom' and the housing bubbles in the US kept up the level of activity in the world economy for some time. With the collapse of the housing bubble, however, world capitalism has entered a period of protracted crisis. There is periodic talk, as at present, of a revival; but, as someone has said using the analogy of a ball bumping along the floor, such talk collapses when the ball falls towards the floor. Even the present revival is based on a rise in consumption in the US which is well above disposable incomes, and hence not sustainable for long.

This crisis in world capitalism has once again, as in the inter-war period, provided a fresh stimulus to the growth of fascism worldwide. One cannot, of course, view the matter in a *simpliste* manner: the recent growth of fascism in Germany, for instance, has to be explained with reference to the crisis in world capitalism, and its refracted effects on Germany, rather than any crisis in Germany itself, which has indeed been less affected than most. But it is clear that mass political mobilization on the basis of blaming the 'other', rather than the functioning of the system, has gained widespread ascendancy, including in India.

This does not mean that fascist regimes will necessarily come to power in many places, or, where they do come to power, will necessarily succeed in setting up fascist States and thereby

.....we are stuck with a perennial presence of fascism as long as neo-liberal capitalism lasts. This makes the current period a dangerous one. If fascism presses on towards a fascist State, the danger is obvious. Even if it plays the 'electoral game', and quits power when voted out, it will continue to remain an alternative, and periodically return to power, leading to a sure though gradual "fascification" of the polity and society.

Fascism thus is neo-liberal capitalism's 'gift' to mankind in the period of its maturity.....The only way of transcending the fascist presence is to transcend neo-liberal capitalism.

perpetuate their rule. Michal Kalecki's famous remark that "under fascism there is no next government" may not hold true this time, as it had done in the earlier period in the context of which the remark was made. But it does mean that contemporary fascism is going to be around for some time.

Neither of the two conditions mentioned above which had marginalized fascism in the post-war era holds at present. Contemporary fascism is unlikely to burn itself (while inflicting immense destruction on mankind) through a war. Rivalry between the big capitalist powers, or what Lenin had called "inter-imperialist rivalry", is obviously muted, and likely to remain so, thanks above all to the fact that finance capital, unlike in Lenin's time, is now *international*, and opposed to any division of the world into separate spheres of influence that might impede its free cross-border flow. And notwithstanding Donald Trump's sabre-rattling against China (not to mention North Korea), a war does not seem imminent; also in the event of some limited conflicts breaking out, fascisms in other countries that are not directly involved will not get discredited.

Likewise, any return to pre-crisis years, let alone to the Golden Age of capitalism, is out of the question; indeed the liberals have no credible answers to the current crisis. Most liberals even shy away from recognizing that there *is* a crisis. While Trump during his election campaign at least talked of the crisis and blamed the "outsiders" for it, stoking animosity against

them, Hillary Clinton scarcely even recognized the existence of a crisis, let alone address it.

Boosting aggregate demand through State expenditure, even if such expenditure is incurred for military purposes, is possible only if it is financed either through a fiscal deficit or through a tax on capitalists (since taxing workers, who consume much of their income anyway, to finance State expenditure, hardly has any *net* demand-expanding effect). Both these ways of financing enhanced State expenditure are eschewed under neo-liberalism, since they are anathema for globalized finance capital, and the liberals are no less solicitous towards it than the fascists. Indeed, if anything, they are more committed to neo-liberalism, which privileges globalized finance than even the fascists (although this is not true in the Indian case where the 'communal-fascists' in power are as committed to neo-liberalism as the 'liberal' Congress).

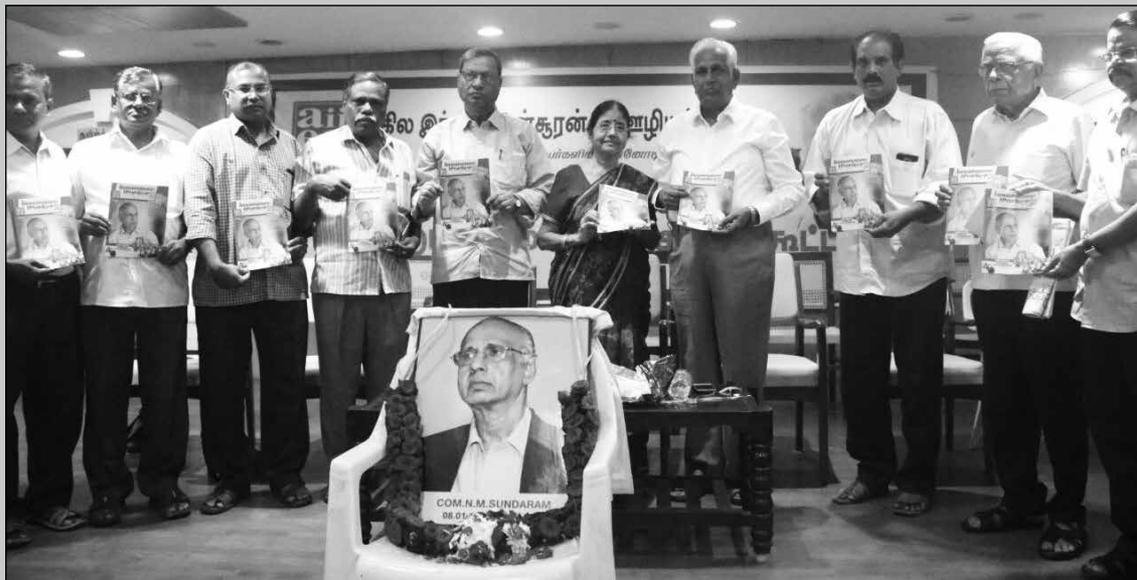
Under these circumstances, we are stuck with a perennial presence of fascism as long as neo-liberal capitalism lasts. This makes the current period a dangerous one. If fascism presses on towards a fascist State, the danger is obvious. Even if it plays the 'electoral game', and quits power when voted out, it will continue to remain an alternative, and periodically return to power, leading to a sure though gradual "fascification" of the polity and society.

Within neo-liberal capitalism, therefore, there seems to be no way of extinguishing or marginalizing the fascist presence. Fascism thus is neo-liberal capitalism's 'gift' to mankind in the period of its maturity, when it submerges the world economy in a crisis, and reaches a dead-end from which there is no obvious escape.

The only way of transcending the fascist presence is to transcend neo-liberal capitalism. The Left can do this, and proceed towards a socialist alternative, but only by winning over the liberal constituency. For that, however, it has to have an understanding with the liberal political forces against fascism, even while insisting on an economic programme that takes the people beyond what neo-liberal capitalism offers. The latter requires a degree of delinking from the current globalization, in the form, for instance, of controls on capital flows. The Left must overcome its economic and political hesitations to play its potential role.

RICH TRIBUTES PAID TO COM.N.M.SUNDARAM

Special issue of Insurance Worker released



In a meeting organized jointly by the SZIEF, GIEA-South Zone, ICEU, Chennai Division-I, ICEU, Chennai Division-II and Chennai Region GIEA, rich tributes were paid to Com.N.M.Sundaram, the legendary leader of the insurance employees' movement who stood for the unity, strength, struggle and advancement of the working class of our country. More than 350 comrades including women attended the meeting held in Chennai on February 3, 2018. It was presided over by Com.M.Kunhikrishnan, President, SZIEF.

Com.Amanulla Khan, President, AIIEA, unveiled a portrait of Com.NMS, as he was popularly known, and garlanded it. The special issue of *Insurance Worker* for the month of February, 2018 dedicated to the memory of Com NMS was released by Com.K.Natarajan, Vice-President, AIIPA, and the first copy handed over to Mrs.Punitha Sundaram.

In his presidential address, Com.M.Kunhikrishnan recalled that Com.

NMS was the best orator on social, political and other issues affecting the common masses, who stood against the neo-liberal policies since 1991. The achievement of pension made him a leader par excellence of the financial sector and he represented all classes of employees, he said.

Com.Amanullakhan, in his address, appreciated the political and ideological understanding of Com.NMS, who strove to pass on his knowledge to the mass of the insurance employees. He had expressed the view that AIIEA was not a 'bread and butter' organization and Com Sundaram made significant contribution in building AIIEA as a revolutionary class oriented trade union. Com. NMS had opposed the anti-reservation agitation in Gujarat, the anti-India movement in Assam and above all he condemned the demolition of Babri Masjid. He stood firm that there can be no compromises on issues impacting the national unity. The unity achieved by AIIEA



across the country including in the troubled Kashmir valley offers important lessons to the Indian ruling classes. He appealed to the audience to draw proper lessons, continue to pursue the political commitments of Com. NMS, celebrate his rich life and to make the organization great.

Com.V.Ramesh, General Secretary, AIIEA, in his speech, highlighted the vision of Com. NMS-of uniting all the workers, of opposing the callous capitalist system, of unity of thought, of forming a unified society-all of which needed to be carried forward. He referred to the achievement of pension, the success of which belonged not only to AIIEA, but to all classes of employees. He called upon the audience to struggle for defeating the capitalist system.

Com.T.K.Rengarajan, M.P., CPI (M), while addressing the meeting, said that he was very close with Com.NMS since the formation of the AIIEA. He recalled that the AIIEA was recognized by the management and then de-recognised, but irrespective of recognition, leaders like Com.NMS commanded respect from the management. He had for long read the *Insurance Worker* journal, which was a binding factor. He called upon the audience to prepare themselves organizationally to face the challenges ahead in the light of the experience gained and shared by Com.NMS.

Com.K.Natarajan referred to the humanitarian outlook of Com.NMS, whose name was interlinked with pension. He was a leader of the leaders and did not hesitate to condemn what he thought as anti-national. He gracefully acknowledged that Com.NMS was guiding the leaders of SZIEF during the difficult periods.

J.Gurumurthy, Former Vice President, AIIEA, said that the AIIEA is a university and serves as a spring-board for all trade union activities. Com.K.David, former Manager of *Insurance Worker* described the efforts made by Com.NMS and other leaders to get him involved in the onerous task of printing and publishing the journal on its transfer from Calcutta to Chennai.

Fraternal TU leaders, most of whom had moved closely with Com.NMS, Comrades T.S.Rengarajan of the Indian Oil Corporation Employees' Union, S.Chellappa of the BSNL Employees' Union, M.Duraipandian of the Confederation of Central Govt. Employees', R.Iangovan of Dakshina Railway Employees' Union, T.Tamilarasu of Bank Employees' Federation of India and Gnanathambi of Tamil Nadu Govt. Employees' Association, shared their rich experiences while getting guided by Com.NMS.

Some important events that got projected in the meeting was the formation of an all-Trade Union Co-ordination Committee with top leaders of Central TUs and other major trade unions in the city due to the sincere efforts of Com.NMS, who worked from behind the scene. The struggles of workers in Binny Mills, the 1974 strike by Central Govt. employees, the bonus struggle and the strike against lock-out in LIC, took the audience to a period far behind. Everyone was moved whenever the name Comrade NMS was mentioned by the Leaders who paid tributes on that day. The name of Comrade NMS will ever be reverberated in the minds of the Insurance employees in their fight against the inequality and unjustness in the society.

We have received a number of letters from insurance employees across the country commending the Editorial Team for the Special Issue on Com NM Sundaram. We are unable to publish all these letters for want of space. We are publishing only two letters from comrades who are outside the insurance industry hereunder.

I can't desist myself from congratulating you and your team for this commendable job to bring out a special issue in memory of Com Sundaram. I completed reading it non stop just now. Being an editor of CITU State Magazine Manaworker, I learned a lot from this issue. Though I am a member of AIIEA family I never knew that LIC was once locked out. It's really a befitting tribute to a legendary comrade.

- **R.Sudhabhaskar**, Editor, Manaworker

The current issue of Insurance Worker is a veritable portrait of the indefatigable personality, Com NMS. As I read the reminiscences of

Comrades and leaders about the leading role played by the late lamented soul, tears ran down my eyes. Once I was privileged to travel with him by Tamilnadu Express and need I say that it was one of the most educating trip I had ever taken. He remembered my younger brother Late S.S.Vijayaraghavan who was with the Controller of insurance before he joined LIC. I had met him on two other occasions. It was great on the part of IW go have an entire issue to pay tribute to the departed soul. I offer my humble tribute to his memory.

- **S.S.Rajagopalan**

61st Conference of IEAPD Patna DO-1

The 61st Annual General Conference of Insurance Employees' Association Patna Division-1 was held from 23rd to 24th December, 2017. The Conference started with flag of our Organization hoisted by President of the Organization Com. Vijay Kumar Verma amidst heavy slogans. After that all comrades paid their homage to martyrs column. About 250 comrades of different Branches of LIC along with fraternal Trade Union Leaders participated in the programme.

The conference was inaugurated by President of the ECZIEA Com. Pradeep Mukharjee. Many fraternal Trade Union Leaders greeted the conference. The Chief Speaker of the opening session was Com.



Shreekant Mishra, General Secretary of the ECZIEA. In his speech, he criticized the present anti-labour, anti-people policy of Government. He pointed out to the threat of privatization of public sector units and exhorted the audience to unite & fight to change the present policy

44th Conference of IEA Jamshedpur Divn

44th Annual General Conference of IEA Jamshedpur Division was held on 2nd -3rd December 2017 at Jamshedpur . The conference started with the flag hoisting by President of IEAJD Com. Ganesh Lal with thunderous slogans . Thereafter comrades paid homage to the martyrs column . The conference was inaugurated by Com. Prakash Viplav , General Secretary , CITU , Jharkhand State . In his inaugural address he elaborately discussed the present socio economic scenario of Jharkhand State and of the country . He also pointed out to the role of LIC in nation building . Chief Speaker of the open session Com. Shreekant Mishra , General Secretary , ECZIEA discussed the issue of disinvestment and privatization in detail . Representatives of different organizations working in LIC has also participated in the open session . All the speakers put emphasis on making efforts for the growth of LIC . They also condemned the anti public sector policies of the government and realized the need to spread the truth among the people .

In delegate session Annual Report was placed by Com. Amit Maity , General Secretary , IEAJD and Statement of Accounts was placed

by the Treasurer Com. Sukanto Sharma , which were unanimously passed by the house . 150 Delegates and Observers attended the conference . 25 delegates put their views at the conference . In his address Com. Pradip Mukherjee , President ECZIEA made a detail discussion on charter of demands . He also discussed the national issues specially the fundamentalism and narrow nationalism . While addressing the delegate session Com. Shreekant Mishra , Gen. Sec. ECZIEA said that we are passing through a tough time and we should not confine ourselves only for transfer , posting and our salary , but as a soldier of AIIEA we have to work to make a healthy and better society and for this , broader unity is essential . The conference unanimously passed many resolutions on important issues.

The conference unanimously selected Com. (Smt.) Purabi Ghosh, Com. Amit Kr. Maity and Com. Sukanto Sharma as President , General Secretary and Treasurer of IEAJD for the coming term.





of the government.

The Delegate Session began on 24th December 2017 with the presentation of Report by the General Secretary. The debate was initiated by Com. B. D. Singh, Joint Secretary of the organization. The delegates

of all Branches (about 16) participated in the discussion. They all criticized the anti labour policy of the government and all of them thanked the organization for regularising the rest of Regular Part Time Employees to Full time. This historical achievement of the organization came in for lot of praise.

The General Secretary of IEAPD, Com. Om Prakash summed up the debate by clarifying on issues raised during the debate. The Report was adopted unanimously. The Conference unanimously adopted 20 resolutions relating to employees, institution and national importance. Com Vijay Kumar Verma, Com. Om Prakash and Com. Mukesh Prasad were unanimously elected the President, General Secretary & Treasurer respectively for the ensuing term. The conference came to a successful end with vote of thanks by Com J.P.Narayan, Joint Secretary.

Gender justice WE CARE - GWECA- Inauguration ONE MORE FEATHER ON THE CAP OF MADURAI DIVISION

The Working Women Sub-Committee of Madurai Division organized a Special Function for the formation of a committee, GWECA, Gender justice WE CARE, on 3rd January 2018 at Sunil Maitra Illam to extend support to victims of Gender Violence.

The State Level Women TU Class held at Yelagiri in the month of November, 2017 gave a direction to the functioning of the Women Sub-committees. One of the decision is to form a Special Committee in each division to protect the rights and extend financial, legal, medical and counseling support to those affected by gender violence.

Madurai Division took a lead to implement this decision and hence arranged this Special Meeting suitably on the birth anniversary of Com. Savithribai Phule who was not only the first woman teacher but had also fought for women's rights, against dowry system, child marriage and the caste system in India.

The meeting was presided over by Com. G. Aruna, Convener. Com. S. Maheswari, Jt. Convener welcomed the gathering of about 150 comrades. Com. J. Vijaya, Jt. Convener, LICSZWWCC gave introductory address explaining the aim of the committee. Dr. S. Rohini Sridhar, Chief Operating Officer of Apollo Hospitals delivered Special Address. In her address, she pointed out that women of today

are facing multiple challenges and advancing forward. They are subject to physical violence, psychological violence, economic violence and gender violence. In such a situation, the formation of GWECA is quite essential and that this committee would function very well to meet its objective of attaining gender justice. Com. N.P.Rameshkannan, General Secretary, proposed a committee consisting of 15 members with Com. G.Aruna as the Coordinator for GWECA. An advisory committee consisting of Com. S. Selvagomathi, a lawyer, Dr. M. Hemalatha, Gynaecologist, Dr. Rani Chakravarthi, psychologist and Com. S.K .Ponnuthai, TN State Secretary, AIDWA was also constituted. Com. C.Rajeswari, Jt. Convener proposed vote of thanks.

Comrades from Fraternal Trade unions participated in good number and made this inauguration function a grand success and the formation of GWECA is one more feather on the cap of Working Women Sub-Committee of Madurai Division.



8th Women's Convention of Sambalpur Division



The 8th Women's Convention of **Sambalpur Division Life Insurance Employee's Association (SDLIEA) Odisha**, was held at Sambalpur on 7th January 2018 in the Divisional Office premises. The convention started with an enthralling opening song rendered by our in-house cultural troupe comprising the lady employees of Sambalpur

Branch-I and DO base unit. Com Suchinta Hasda presided over the meeting on behalf of the presidium. Com. Trinath Dora, Joint Secretary, ECZIEA inaugurated the conference. In his inspiring inaugural address spanning for half an hour, Com. Dora dealt with the issues like Women's reservation bill, triple talaq bill and exposed the approach and hypocrisy of the present government towards women empowerment and emancipation. He exhorted the women employees to have a

critical analysis of all the issues affecting their life and living and face the challenges shedding all inhibitions. He also advised to socialize the organization for its further consolidation.

Com. Anghamitra Sarangi, Convener of Women sub-committee initiated the discussion on the approach paper. She presented a very vivid analysis of the contribution of women towards a healthy and just society

10th Women's Convention - Guwahati Div. - 1

The 10th Convention of women employees of LIC, Guwahati Division was successfully held on 11th February, 2018 under the auspices of Women Sub-committee of GDIEA. Indeed the convention was a splendid one being whole heartedly participated by the women employees of divisional office and different branches under Guwahati Division of LIC along with several male employees and representative of fraternal organisation.

A presidium consisting of Com. Arati Sharma, Com. Shibani Bhattacharjee and Com. Pritirekha Duara conducted the convention. Com. Arpita Roy, Joint Convener of Zonal level Women Co-ordination Committee, EZIEA, inaugurated the convention. In her forty five minutes long deliberation she dealt on every nitty-gritty of the gender discrimination that has been prevailing in all sphere of our society and skillfully promoted by the market forces in the contemporary society. She urged upon women comrades to come forward to make the women sub-committee more vigil and thus strengthen AIIEA.

The cultural troupe of GDIEA led by Com. Ghana Deka performed couple of chorus which excelled the convention.

Com. Maitreyee Misra placed the draft report of the Women Sub-committee of GDIEA in the convention. Com. Doly Rekha Neog, Com. Rakhi Mandal, Com. Vihuli Sangma,



as also the problems and injustice being faced by them in a society ridden with patriarchal mindset further compounded by Neo-liberal economic policy. The convention was well attended by more than 80% of Women employees representing almost all base units besides the representative of the local Class-I federation. Many a lady comrades participated in the debate and discussed on various topics ranging from Women specific issues to subjects of organizational and national interests. All of them were unanimous in lauding the efforts of AIIEA in organizing and empowering Women employees.

Com.M R Bishi, General Secretary, SDLIEA while summing up the debate urged the members to take active and lead role in the organization in the days to come. The convention unanimously adopted a ten point resolutions and elected Com.Sanghamitra Sarangi as convener, Com.K.Sobha and Com.S.Hasda as Joint Convener of the Women sub-committee for the ensuing term. A ten member working committee was also elected on this occasion. The convention came to a close with the vote of thanks proposed by Com. Lajbanti Sahu of DO base unit.

Com. Sangita Gupta, Com. Kakali Roy, Com. Gita Pegu and Com. Madhu Chanda Gupta participated in the discussion on the report and enriched the report with valuable suggestions. After summing up of the discussion on the report by Com. Maitreyee Misra, Jt. Convener of Women Sub-committee, GDIEA, the report was unanimously adopted in the convention.

The convention also adopted several resolutions.

Com. Indira Newar (WWCC), Com. Niyti Barman(AIDWA), Nirupama Bhattacharyya (LICI class-1 federation), Awanti Bora (Agent Association) and Com. Anjan Bhattacharji (LICI Pensioners' Association) also greeted the Convention.

The Convention elected twenty two member women sub-committee of GDIEA with Com. Geeta Pegu, Com. Rajkumari Chanda, Com. Sangita Gupta and Com. Doly Rekha Neog Hazarika as Convenors.

Com. Rajkumari Chanda, Convener, Women sub Committee explained purpose of the meeting. Com. Pitambar Rajbhandari, General Secretary, GDIEA also addressed the convention.



5th Thrissur Division Womens' Convention

The 5th Womens' Convention of LIC Employees' Union Thrissur Division was held at NGO Union Hall at Thrissur on 26th January, 2018. The Convention was inaugurated by Adv.K R Vijaya, State Vice President, All India Democratic Womens' Association.

"Nehruvian Socialist Philosophy that informed Indian policy directions was the motivating factor for developing public sector in India in the post-independence era. It is our social duty to protect LIC in public sector" - she said, at the outset, in her inaugural speech. British rulers adopted the tactics of divide and rule creating religious nationalism that paved the way for partition. The proponents of neo-liberalism are implementing these policies all over the world and India is no exception. Women are the worst victim of these - she opined. She expressed satisfaction over the activities of Kudumbasree (A Solidarity of Women) while concluding her speech she urged us to work for the social upliftment of women by aligning with other organizations that champion for the cause.

Com.K R Vini, Convener Women's Sub Committee presented the report that was followed by discussion on it, participated by eleven Comrades. Com K R Vini gave reply to the discussions and Com Deepak Viswanath, General Secretary LIC Employees' Union, Thrissur Division summed up the proceedings and Com M Rajeev, President LIC Employees' Union Thrissur Division greeted the Convention.

Com. K R Vini delivered the welcome speech and Com C Anitha Jt. Secretary LIC Employees' Union presided over the convention. The convention came to a close with vote of thanks by Com. Rekha R Prabhu, Jt. Secretary, LIC Employees' Union, Thrissur Division.

Dist. Secretaries' Meet of GIEA-South Zone

The Triennial event of GIEA South Zone – the Zonal-level District Secretaries' Meet was held on January 7 & 8, 2018, at Chennai. The venue of the meeting hall was named after the legendary leader of the AIIEA, late Comrade N.M.Sundaram. Com.P.R.Sasi, President, GIEA South Zone, hoisted the AIIEA flag and presided over the meeting. Homage was paid to Comrades N.M.Sundaram and Com.R.Govindarajan. Senior leaders of the organisation, Comrades J.Gurumurthy, R.Vaikuntam, R.Narasimhan and P.V.Nandakumar besides the Regional and Dist. Secretaries from all the five Southern States numbering about 150 were present. The other guests who graced the occasion included Comrades T.Senthilkumar, Genl.Secretary SZIEF, K.Swaminathan, Vice-President, R.K.Gopinath, Treasurer and R.Sarvamangala, Joint Secretary of SZIEF, L.Palaniappan, President, S.Rameshkumar, General Secretary, G.Jayaraman, Joint Secretary, K.Sridhar, Treasurer and D.Ramesh, Joint Secretary of ICEU, Chennai Division-I, K.Manoharan, General Secretary, R.Sinduja, Treasurer and Anuja, Asst. Treasurer of ICEU, Chennai Division-II and K.David, former Manager of *Insurance Worker*.

Com.M.Nagarajan, General Secretary, Chennai Region GIEA, welcomed the leaders and the gathering. Com.P.R.Sasi informed the gathering that the object of conducting the meeting was to assess the extent of the campaign against privatization and the results of the check-off exercise in order to further strengthen the organization to face the challenges of the future. Com.Sanjay Jha, Secretary, General Insurance Standing Committee of AIIEA, delivering his inaugural address, stressed the need for holding such meetings regularly once in two years and expressed his happiness that the all the programmes had been implemented most successfully in the South Zone comprising five southern States and the message should be carried forward to all units across the country. He revealed that while the stock prices of New



India were going down following the sale of the company's shares, the business has recorded a steep growth making it financially strong.

There was a Power-Point presentation by Com.G.Anand, General Secretary, GIEA, South Zone, which helped to review the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, providing the vital statistical information on a score of issues including the membership position following the check-off exercises and the positive and negative results of various programmes undertaken.

Delivering a special address on the Centre's demonetization and GST schemes, Com.V.Sridhar, Sr. Deputy Editor of *Frontline* journal (of *The Hindu* Group), Bangalore, very elaborately discussed and convinced the audience that both the measures had hit hard the common people, the poor farmers and the small producers. The demonetization had caused the death of 150 people, prices of agricultural products went down in an unprecedented manner and people lost access to their own savings. It had not touched black money. Both the demonetization and GST measures were ideological assaults on the common people and an attack on the federal structure envisaged in the Constitution of India. After concluding his speech, he also gave detailed clarifications on the points raised by the participants.

Then the discussions by the leaders of the Units on organization was held and



in all 31 comrades including six new cadres took part in it. Winding up the discussions, Com.G.Anand made a brilliant presentation explaining the macro and micro issues confronting the organization and pointed out the tasks to be accomplished by the leaders and cadres in order to further strengthen the movement.

Dr. S.Kasi, State Secretary, People's Health Forum, gave a lecture on "Lifestyle Diseases", which helped the audience to understand the subject thoroughly. Senior leaders Comrades J.Gurumurthy and P.V.Nandakumar greeted the participants.

Com.Amanulla Khan, President, AIIEA, who spoke on "Idea of India" stressed the need to fulfill the vision of India's independence movement which was incorporated in the Directive Principles of State Policy which included freedom from hunger, equality of

opportunity, universal franchise, workers' participation in management, education and health for all, elimination of unemployment, etc. But today the people are facing all sorts of threats, communal tensions are made to flare up and India's great civilization is being threatened. There is talk at the higher level of doing away with secularism in order to bring about a totalitarian state. We should fight for economic justice and take all steps to unite the people, he urged He made it known that the AIIEA stands for social, political and economic justice and we should tread in a revolutionary path to bring about a classless society as envisaged by the great and mighty leader of AIIEA, Com.N.M. Sundaram. He also took pains to give clarifications on the questions raised by some of the participants.

Com.N.Balakrishnan, President, Chennai Region GIEA, proposed a vote of thanks.

Guwahati Divisional Level T. U. Workshop

A Divisional Level Trade Union Camp was organised by "Gauhati Division Insurance Employees' Association" (GDIEA) on 21st January, 2017. Com. Maitreyee Misra, President, GDIEA conducted the trade union camp. The trade union camp was attended by more than hundred leading activists from different base units under Guwahati Division. The first subject "Present Situation and tasks before Insurance Employees" was dealt by Com. Dhurbajyoti Ganguli, Joint Secretary, Eastern Zone Insurance Employees' Association (EZIEA). While dealing the subject he spoke in details how capitalist system undergoing serious crisis and neo-liberal policies of the government has brought worse situations to the working class and toiling mass of the country. Com. Ganguli called upon the gathering to develop political consciousness to fight against capitalist system and neo-liberal policies. The second subject "Organisation" was dealt by Com. Birendra Kumar Sarma, Former President of GDIEA. He shared his long years of experiences in trade union movement particularly the glorious journey with GDIEA. Com. Sarma emphasised the need of strengthening the organisation so that the enormous challenges being faced by the employees as well as LIC can be met successfully.

On this occasion Com. Birendra



Kumar Sarma, Former President of GDIEA was felicitated on his superannuation from Corporation on 31st December, 2017. Com. Satanjib Das, President, EZIEA and Com. Ranjit Bhuyan, Joint Secretary also addressed the meeting and greeted Com. Birendra Kumar Sarma.

The program began with a song by Com. Ghan Kanta Deka. Com. Pitambar Rajbhandari, General Secretary, GDIEA explained the purpose of the meeting.

In question and answer session many participants raised queries which were clarified by Com. Satanjib Das, President EZIEA. The trade union camp culminated with the vote of thanks by Com. Ankur Phukan, Joint Secretary, GDIEA

SEMINAR on BUDGET by CDIEA, CUTTACK

A seminar was arranged by CDIEA, Cuttack on "CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BUDGET- 2018-19" on 8th February 2018 in LIC, D.O. Premises, Cuttack. The meeting was addressed by Dr. SANTOSH KUMAR MOHAPATRA, a leading Columnist/Economist of Odisha. Like teacher, Com Mohapatra very lucidly and critically analysed various concepts of budget, its genesis, importance in the view of forth coming Assemblies' election in eight states.. In his hour long deliberation he dubbed the current Budget is nothing but a Jumla. He told that a Jumla government can present only Jumla Budget to hood wink masses. He also told that some grand schemes have been announced to repackage the Budget as pro-poor and pro-farmer. Finance Minister has announced the National Health Protection Schemes (NHPS) to provide health cover to 10 crore families. But no outlay is allocated for same purpose. There much talk of providing Minimum Support Price (MSP) to farmers one -and- half times of the cost of production .But while deciding cost, Swaminathan Commission's recommendation is ignored. Comprehensive cost is not taken in

to consideration. He also dubbed the budget as contractionary as increase of total outlay (10.1%) is less than the projected nominal GDP growth of 11.5% in 2018-19. The allocated expenditure in many areas has been reduced in real terms, if inflation is taken in to consideration. He also pointed out that the Government feels elated in raising Rs. 1 Lakh crore by way of disinvestment of PSUs against target of Rs72,000 crore. This is nothing but akin to selling the national assets to reduce fiscal deficit . He also told that inability of government to tax the rich and raising resources through indirect taxes is nothing but imposing burden on masses. He urged for a bitter struggle to uphold democratic values and also warned that if this government comes in to power again in 2019, its first attempt will be disinvesting LIC. More than 100 of employees, officers and agents were present. While Com S. Duttgupta presided over the meeting, Com Managobinda Barik, General Secretary, gave brief introduction. Com Abhay Kumar Das, Organised Secretary proposed vote of thanks.

ICEU CHENNAI 2 PROVIDES AID TO SCHOOL

ICEU, Chennai Division-2, Women Sub-Committee organised an "Educational Aid" to school Childrens Programme on 30.01.2018(Tuesday) at Govt High school, Veliyagaram Village, Tiruttani (Nearly 100 Kms away from Chennai) . Three computer with necessary furniture were donated. The School library and Teachers Rest Room were also renovated at a cost of Rs.235000/-.

SZIEF Office Bearers Com K.Swaminathan, Vice President ,Com R.K.Gopinath, Treasurer, Com V.Janakiraman, Asst Treasurer graced the occasion. Com R.Sarvamangala Jt.Secretary, Presided over the programme. Com K.Manoharan, General Secretary, ICEU, spoke about the social commitment of AIIEA. Sri Aravindan, Head Master of the school expressed deep gratitude to ICEU

and Women Sub-Committee for this nice gesture. Com K.Thulasi, Convenor, Women Sub-Committee thanked Participants and all Comrades who contributed the fund to provide this aid to the school .

It is a matter of pride and happiness that a large number of employees from across the division attended the programme by taking one day casual leave.



ICPA Kadapa Divisional conference



ICPA, Kadapa 5th Divisional Conference was held successfully on 7th January 2018 at Kadapa. The conference was presided by Com S Khader Basha President, ICPA, Kadapa.

Com R Janardhan, Joint Secretary, AIIPA inaugurating the conference made a scathing attack on the anti-people measures of the NDA government. He demanded immediate solutions to the long pending issues of pensioners in the insurance industry. He also made an appeal to the pensioners to make a common cause with the employees to protect the LIC in public sector.

ICPA Division General Secretary Com K Sankar Rao presented Secretary's report and the statements of accounts was presented by Com

G Anandan, treasurer. Both were unanimously approved. ICEU General Secretary Com A Raghunatha Reddy, Pensioners' & Retired Persons' Association Dy General Secretary Com BVS Raju spoke and explained the prevailing situation in which the pensioners had to carry forward their struggles. Insurance Associations representatives Coms T Muralidhar Reddy, Veera Prathap, S Prabhakar and GRC Rao extended greetings to the conference. The conference felicitated the outgoing office bearers and the senior pensioners in the division.

The conference elected Com CS Prakash Rao as the President, Com K Sankara Rao as the General Secretary and Com D Rajagopal Reddy as the Treasurer of ICPA, Kadapa for the ensuing term. The revolutionary songs sung by Com V Kasthuri Rangacharlu enthused the audience.

The conference passed the resolutions demanding the upgradation of pension, the solution for the issues of pre-01.01.1986 and pre-01.08.97 retirees and also demanding another option for pension scheme in LIC. The meeting concluded with vote of thanks by Com K Sankar Rao, GS, ICPA, Kadapa.

ODISHA STATE GIPA CONFERENCE

The 8th Conference of Odisha State General Insurance Pensioners' Association, OSGIPA was held in jam packed S.N. Sirkar Memorial Hall, Cuttack on 28th January. Com. Y.C. Das presided over the conference. After the motion of condolence Com. S.K. Dhal, Gen. Secretary placed the Report before the house and Com. B.N. Hota the Statement of Accounts which was unanimously adopted. About 15 Comrades participated on the report.

Com. Priyabrata Bagchi, Jt. Secretary, AIIPA inaugurating the Conference. He stressed the need to strengthen the GIPSA and the AIIPA as well as AIIEA for the better interest of the nation, the industry and the employees/pensioners. The present government at the center is determined to kill the PS Insurance industry to benefit the private players and multinational corporations and only AIIEA can unite the people and the employees for a greater movement to save the industry. If there is no industry and there is no addition of pensioners there is no guarantee of continuous pension to the pensions. Hence, there is need to fight against the NPS.

Com. Gajendra Nath Mohanty, Vice President, AIIPA narrated in detail the case of updation of

pension, problems being faced by the pensioners while submitting life certificate. In the mean time the pensioners have secured approval of I Card for all the pensions. Some companies have already issued and some are in the process. There have been improvements in medi-claim and further improvements are required. Nodal Officers have been posted in each RO to look after the issues of the Pensions. We have secured so many achievements and some more achievements are in pipe line. In spite of that there are certain short comings at the implementation level which are being looked after by our Comrades and care being taken so that the retirees will never feel neglected.

Com. Bamadev Mishra, Jt. Secy, OSGIEA greeted the House on behalf of OSGIEA. He claimed that OSGIPA is emerging as one of the strongest Pensioners' Association in Odisha and working in line with the foot prints of AIIEA/AIIPA. He assured all support from OSGIEA for strengthening OSGIPA. The House elected a 15 members WC with Com. Y.Ch. Das, Com. S.K. Dhal and Com. B.N. Hota as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the ensuing term.

TRADE UNION CLASS OF ECZIEA

The Zonal level Trade Union workshop of ECZIEA was held at Hazaribagh from 26th to 28th January 2018, just one month after we lost our beloved leader and a great working class thinker of the century, Com.N.M.Sundaram. The hospitality extended to the participants from all the divisions of the zone, by the comrades of Hazaribagh was in a befitting manner. Around 55 participants got mesmerised by the deliberations of Com. Amanulla Khan, Com.V.Ramesh and Com. Dharmaraj Mahapatra. The marathon lectures of these three leaders as well as analysts continued for two days which clarified much confusion of comrades and at the same time augmented the knowledge level about the socio economic scenario of present day India and the undemocratic, authoritarian regime of Modi Government.

Com.Dharmaraj Mahapatra, General Secretary of Central Zone Insurance Employees' Association (CZIEA), made a flamboyant analysis about the "Current Political Situation and Task before the Working Class". He explained the nature of present day ruling class who has been relentlessly trying to change the basic characteristics of the Indian Constitution and thereby establish a "Hindu Rashtra". He also explained how the fourth pillar of democracy, i.e. the press and media house has been captured by the ruling class and they are being used to propagate the ruling class capitalist philosophy among the general masses and infuse the communal ideology into their minds. They are also trying to malign the basic nature of unity in diversity on which this land stands. Through religious fundamentalism they are trying to divide the people of India on the basis of religion, caste, creed and sex. Our basic rights guaranteed by the constitution of India are attacked and conspiring to curtail the rights of labour class by amending the labour laws and replacing those to labour codes. Com. Mahapatra urged upon the working class to associate with the common masses and their cause to defeat the rightist forces and protect our industry.

On day two, Com.Amanulla Khan discussed about the "Idea of India- A working class perspective". Before beginning the discussion, he expressed his agony that after

69 years of independence we still perceive what type of India we should have. During struggle for independence we had hardly any differentiation on the basis of religion, caste etc. All were living in a state of united brotherhood in spite of 3200 castes, 1640 prevalent dialects different sects of religious practices and various identities. Unity in diversity was the essence of Indian sub continent. But today the gap among the people of India has been widened due to religious fundamentalism, caste and economic disparity. In his deliberations he clearly discussed about the provisions mentioned about the preamble of Indian constitution which is the foundation of Indian democracy. There is clear cut mention about the type of nation that we should have. The provisions of the constitution direct the functioning of the government and guarantees certain rights to its citizens but the ruling class from time to time has amended the provisions for their political gains and populist measures. The concept of respect to all religions is in jeopardy. Economic development has not reached to all sections of society so there is fighting for reservation for example for Marathas in Maharashtra, Patels in Gujarat and Gujjars in Haryana etc. He also discussed how Indian democracy is in deep crisis. All government institutions are owned and controlled by the rightist forces and being misutilised, importance of parliament has been eroded, bills are often given the stamp of money bill, independence of judiciary has been questioned, and MPs are taking bribe to raise questions in parliament and many more. Indian culture has been constantly attacked and history is being distorted. On the other hand, there is hardly any discussion on social issues like unemployment, food security to poorer sections of the society, governmental support to farmers. Always emotions are being utilised to influence the people.

Com.V.Ramesh General Secretary of AIIEA made us aware about our organisation through his discussion on the topic "AIIEA- Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow". He explained the socio political situation through which AIIEA came into existence and its constant effort to nationalise the insurance industry. The great struggle led by AIIEA in 1974 and the tactical

move that united the 45000 members which forced the then government to settle the wage revision. The fourteen days struggle proved the strength of the organisation. The defeat of split bill in 1980s was another milestone in the history of AIIEA. The major task before us now is to fight the neo liberalism and protect the public sector character of LIC of India. Spreading the negatives of neo liberal economy among the masses. Another major task before us is the unity among members and efforts to inject the working class philosophy through debate and discussion and pass on the legacy of AIIEA down the line.

At length Com.Amanulla Khan explained on the subject “Neoliberalism and impact on working class”. He discussed in detail about the economic liberalism and was of the opinion that market economy has created an urge among the colonial rulers to capture world market for which two world wars were fought. J M Keynes full employment theory stated that state has an active role in economic development that ultimately created public

sector undertakings. Philosophy of cradle to grave is the responsibility of the state which was seen in Soviet Union where state developed into an welfare state. He talked about the financialisation of capital, that is, how capital brings capital. But on the contrary neo liberalism has stated that, “It is not the business of government to be in business”. Other negative factors of neo liberalism is the introduction of artificial intelligence which has been contributing to joblessness in the country, end guaranteed employment, end of PDS, end of subsidy etc.

He raised some issues which insurance industries are facing and how to overcome those. Invoking the famous quotation of Sri P.Chidambaram, former Union Finance Minister, “you are not only market leader but market creator”, Com. Amanulla Khan outlined some of the major challenges confronting us.

The three day long trade union workshop opened the eyes of leaders to prepare them to move the struggle against neo liberal economic policies ahead.

KDLIEA ORGANISES T U WORKSHOP

Kolkata Division Life Insurance Employees’ Association (KDLIEA) organized a Trade Union Class on the topic, ‘The spread of Artificial Intelligence and its impact on the Working Class’ on 13.01.2018 in the Conference Hall of the Divisional Office. Professor Subimal Sen, Researcher and teacher of Nuclear Physics, was the sole speaker in the T.U. Class. Com. Ramkrishna Datta, President, KDLIEA, presided over the entire proceedings of the day. Altogether, 104 comrades from sixteen bases of KDLIEA attended the class with eagerness. This number included the secretariat members of KDLIEA, the EZIEA secretariat members stationed at K.M.D.O.-1 and some former leaders of the organization.

At the outset, Com. Ramkrishna Datta invited Com. Amitesh Sarkar, General Secretary to briefly address the gathering. Com. Sarkar explained the purpose of holding such class and the rationale behind selecting the topic. Thereafter, Com. Datta invited Professor Subimal Sen to deliver his speech on the topic mentioned above. Prof. Sen very lucidly discussed the complex relationship between technology and labour and expressed his deep concern about the risk posed by artificial

intelligence. He emphatically pointed out that the question of technological progress and its impact in human society must be discussed in the context of prevailing socio-economic order. In a class divided society the benefits of technology are mainly enjoyed by small groups of individuals (Capitalists) enabling them to make enormous profits at the cost of labour. He cited a number of examples how labour is squeezed further with technological upgradation in a capitalist society. He quoted a World Bank Report on the very negative impact of artificial intelligence on labour. He also quoted Stephen Hawking, the renowned physicist and cosmologist who had said, “The full development of artificial intelligence could spell the end of human race.” Dr. Sen, a man who is not at all against the progress of science and technology, convincingly concluded that only a just and fair socio-economic system can harness the unprecedented progress in science and technology for the benefit of human society as a whole.

Professor Sen’s speech was followed by an absorbing interactive session where the questions raised by some of the participants were very intelligently dealt by the speaker.



Seminar on FRDI Bill at Visakhapatnam

Visakhapatnam Insurance Institute organised a seminar at Public Library, Visakhapatnam on 07.01.2018 on FRDI Bill and Its Impact. The seminar was addressed by Prof K Nageshwar, Osmania University, Ex MLC and prominent TV analyst. Addressing the seminar, Prof Nageshwar said that the Financial Resolution Deposit Insurance Bill proposed by the Central Government will affect the deposits of millions of the common people of the country. The FRDI bill proposes that in the event of a bank going into losses, the losses will be made up with the depositor's money rather than the Government. During the period of recession, globally, several banks were bailed out, ie; the losses were made up by the Government and it was called bail out. Now the bill proposes a bail in clause, meaning, the losses of the banks will be made up by the depositor's money. This is a dangerous clause and will affect the people of the country in the long run. The banking and insurance industry in India could survive the recession only because it was predominantly in the public sector. The whopping NPAs in the banks today are a result of the faulty and skewed policies of the government. The proposed FRDI bill is a result of the pressure from the G-20 countries, though 15 of these

countries have not implemented the bail in clause. Modi is very eager to implement this FRDI bill. The Resolution Corporation set up as a part of the FRDI bill would be pass SEBI, RBI, IRDA and the PFRDA. The resolution corporation will have the powers to merge or close down banks or insurance companies in the event of bankruptcy. It may also reduce the salaries of employees and also reduce the number of employees. The Government is allowing huge loans to corporates like Ambani and Adani from public sector banks, and when these are defaulted, it proposes that the NPAs must be made good with the money of the common people. This is gross injustice to the people. These issues must be campaigned among the people. The FRDI bill is an anti-people bill and must be fought back vehemently, he said.

People from many walks of life attended the seminar. LIC, GIC, bank employees, medical representatives, port workers, retired employees and many other public sector employees attended the seminar. Sri K Nageswara Rao, Vice president, Insurance Institute, presided over the meeting. Smt. Rachel, Treasurer, VII, invited the guests and Smt P Purnima, Hony Secretary, VII proposed a vote of thanks.

26624 SIGNATURES AGAINST ATTEMPTS TO DILUTE Sec. 498A IN 4 DAYS BY WOMEN SUB COMMITTEES OF DIVISIONS IN SOUTH ZONE

Women subcommittees of Divisions in **South Zone** garnered about **26624** signatures against attempts to dilute Sec. 498-A within four days from Jan 10th to Jan 13th. The call for signature campaign has been given by **ALL INDIA DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (AIDWA)**.

Sec. 498-A of Indian Penal Code protects women from Domestic Violence. As per this section, husband or a relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years and shall be liable to fine.

Indian Penal Code, 1860 was amended

in 1983 to safeguard the interest of women against the cruelty they face in their matrimonial home and inserted Sec.498-A which deals with "Matrimonial Cruelty" to women. According to law, Matrimonial Cruelty is a cognizable (register and investigate the complaint), non-bailable (have to appear in court and get bail from the judge) and non compoundable (complaint can't be withdrawn) offence. In most cases, affected women would be forced to withdraw the complaint. But, the above provision helps women to ensure deliverance of justice. Recently efforts are being made to dilute provisions of this

Campaign against Privatisation of Dredging Corporation of India

ICEU Visakhapatnam has campaigned vigorously against the privatisation of the public sector Dredging Corporation of India.

The Dredging Corporation of India was started in 1976 with a Government investment of Rs.28 crore. It is the only public sector dredging company in India and since inception has been running on profits. Today it has an asset base of Rs.6000 crores. It is the world's 5th largest dredging company with advanced technology and experienced staff. It is vital to the country's maritime trade and even helping to maintain security of the Indian Navy operations along the 7,517 km-coastline. The parliamentary standing committee appointed to study the performance of DCI has reported that "huge funds are outstanding due to DCI from various agencies and as a result of which the DCI has not been able to take up development activities." The stalled Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project is a case in point. Meant to create a shipping route in the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka so as to reduce the travel time for ships traversing between India's east coast and west coast, the project began in 2005. But it was abandoned in 2009. DCIL has still not been paid for the dredging work it did on the Sethusamudram project, and the Sethusamudram Corporation owed the company Rs 426.41 crore for the dredging work it had done. Today the Government



wants 100% privatisation of DCI. It has been undervalued at 1400 crores as against the assets of 6000 crores.

The non executive and officers associations have been on the struggle path for more 6 months. One of the non executive employee had committed suicide opposing the privatisation, with his suicide note holding the government responsible for his death. Employees are on a hunger strike.

ICEU Visakhapatnam leadership expressed solidarity to their struggle by regularly visiting the agitation site. Lunch hour demonstrations were held twice across the division and pamphlets distributed. 47 comrades including ICEU leadership, women comrades and city base unit comrades participated in the relay hunger strike on one day. ICEU comrades have also participated in door to door campaign and campaign amongst morning walkers, markets, beach road etc, against the privatisation.

People for India forum has organised a round table meeting on 19.12.2017 involving all the public sector units of Vizag to chalk out an agitation programme. Prominent persons Sri EAS Sarma, former energy secretary to Govt of India, Prof KV Ramana PFI Chairperson PFI and former VC of Andhra University, Com Aja Sarma, Secretary, Forum for Development of North Andhra and other fraternal unions participated and opposed the privatisation move in one voice.

People for India also organised a people's ballot on the issue on 5th Jan 2018. The people's ballot was inaugurated by Prof KV Ramana, PFI chairperson and Com Aja Sarma. As per the joint call of the Public Sector Coordination Committee of Visakhapatnam, the people's ballot was held across 150 centres in the city. The ballot was opened at a public meeting which was addressed by Com K Hemlatha, CITU All India President. Out of 1,00,100 vote polled, 1,00,030 people voted against privatisation of DCI.

section based on the argument that this section is being misused.

AIDWA has launched a signature campaign against dilution of Sec. 498-A. SZIEF has given a call for this signature campaign by announcing Jan 10, 2018 as "SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN DAY" against Matrimonial Cruelty. Divisional units have taken serious efforts to make this signature campaign a very successful one. Divisions in the South Zone garnered 26624 signatures within a very short span of four days with Thanjavur leading with 5484, Salem - 4860, Vellore- 4369, Madurai - 3164, Coimbatore - 2883, Thrissur - 1441, Tirunelveli - 1268, Chennai 2 - 1128, Chennai 1 - 1103, Kozhicode - 608, Trivandrum - 316.

Insurance News in brief

■ A.M.KHAN, DHARWAD

Come March 1, 2018 all unclaimed monies of the policyholders lying with the insurers for over ten years should be transferred to Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund (SCWF), IRDA reminds insurance industry. Life, non-life and health insurance service providers will have to comply this every year. SCWF was set up in 2016, ostensibly, for promoting welfare of senior citizens through schemes such as old age pensions, long term savings instruments, promotion of health care and nutrition and affordable health care among others.



T S Vijayan, Chairman, IRDA assesses that the protection gap – the required cover and cover actually availed, in the life insurance in India is Rs.480 lakh crore and there is a potential of Rs.3 lakh crore in health insurance.



Senior citizens become the victims of medical inflation, which is increasing by 12-15 percent every year. This has doubled the health insurance claims, which has given the insurers a reason to increase the premium steeply for the customers above the age 60 years.



New India Assurance company gets A-(Excellent) and Long-Term Issuer Credit Rating of "A" by the US rating agency A M Best. The rating agency says "New India's balance sheet strength reflects solid risk-adjusted capitalisation that is supported by low underwriting leverage. Its capital and surplus are by far the largest among all non-life insurers in India, standing at Rs 359 billion (\$5.5 billion) as of March 31, 2017. It has posted a net profit of Rs 617.28 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2017. New India has brought down its underwriting losses to Rs 464.30 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2017 from Rs 1,036.89 crore posted during the quarter ended December 31, 2016.



Private health insurers plan to work with fitness trackers and wearables to help them to design coverage plans that incentivise a health conscious customers. Apps and wearables help monitor health of the user. The data captured from apps/wearable devices can help predict the health of the customer. Healthy customers benefits the health insurance firm. Will such apps

and wearables be made a must before a cover is given? For more than two third of the population of India, who cannot afford even the existing health insurance premium, it will be unbearable burden.



Eyeing for a greater profit!. The slimy tongue of the private sector is more jubilant than the target population of the New Health Protection Scheme announced by the Government of India recently. Ten crore families to be covered with Rs.5 lakh health insurance is the aim of the Scheme. "An effectively executed [National Health Protection Scheme](#) will bring coverage to 40 per cent of the population and generate substantial growth in health insurers' premiums" says Standard & Poor. It expects the industry to capitalise on the tax incentives and rising medical inflation !.



Draft IRDA (reinsurance) Regulations, 2018, have come under severe criticism particularly from the private insurance sector. The IRDA, in the said Draft, stipulates that the reinsurance consumers will have to approach reinsurance providers in 'preferred order'. The Draft regulations prescribe that the riskshare to be placed with the Indian reinsurer (GIC) and Foreign Reinsurance Branches (FRBs) within the Indian market without cession limits. Citing that this would lead to limiting the competition which will lead not only to increase in reinsurance premium but will also heap a greater amount of risk on these few companies, the dissidents argue. They are demanding level playing field terming that the proposed regulations tend towards protectionism.



The number of claims settled by LIC as at the end of the December 2017 was 19,266 for death, 697,986 for maturity, 952,913 for survival benefits, and 101,815 claims towards annuities or pensions. Its insurance reserves increased by 13 per cent, amount to Rs 96.67 billion, for the third quarter of Financial Year 2018, up from Rs 85 billion in the third quarter of FY17.



Head of AXA SA, one of Europe's largest insurers, Thomas Buberl, chief executive officer, warns that basement properties whether in New York or Mumbai will not be insurable if the climate changes advance as they are now.

Economic Tid Bits

■ J.SURESH, MYSORE

- ◆ According to the World Inequality Report 2018, the top 1% of the world's population has captured twice as much the bottom 50% of the population since 1980. Income growth has been minimal or even zero for individuals with incomes between the global bottom 50% and top 1% groups. In India, the rise of inequalities as measured by the income shares of the top 10% saw the sharpest rise from a little over 30% to nearly 60% in India between 1980 to 2015.
- ◆ According to the latest Oxfam report, 1% of India's rich population is controlling 73% of total wealth of the nation, whereas 78% of the people are eking out a living with just Rs. 20/- Per day. 67 Crore Indian comprising the population's poorest half saw their wealth rise by just 1% in 2017. The wealth of the richest 1% in India increased by 20.9 lakh crores which is almost equivalent to the Central Government's budget for 2017-2018. India also saw the increase in number of billionaires at a rate of one in every two days. Billionaire wealth has risen by an average of 13% a year since 2010, six times faster than the wages of ordinary workers, which have risen by just 2% on yearly average. It will take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what a top paid executive at a leading company earns in a year.
- ◆ The three biggest Corporations in the world – Amazon, Berkshire Hathaway and JP Morgan Chase have announced major cut in the employer health care costs, paving way for further monopolisation of health care by a handful billionaire run Corporations subordinating the social needs of the people to Wall Street. Health care in USA is a \$ 3.3 trillion industry that accounts for 18% of the American economy. Whoever controls health care will stand to profit billions of personal wealth. Amazon has 542000 employees around the world. Berkshire Hathaway employs 367000 and JP Morgan Chase has more than 240000 employees and all of them needs to share higher cost of health care expenses with this announcement. The market capitalisation of the three companies is \$ 1.6 trillion, a sum larger than the GDP of Spain (\$ 1.2 trillion). The combined wealth of Bezos and Buffet alone (\$ 210 billion) is almost twice the combined fiscal budget of 2018 of USA for education, housing and labour.
- ◆ The Bolivian banks last year have recorded the second highest growth rate in Latin America, at 12% compared to an average of 4.7% for the region. The poverty rate of Bolivia is 39% and 64 % of the workers work in informal sector with a minimum wage of US \$ 290, which works out to US \$ 1.57 an hour. In terms of Human Development Index, Bolivia is placed at 119 out of 193 countries, considering the life expectancy, education, per capita income and levels of social inequality.
- ◆ The US Congress has passed a bill proposing \$ 1.5 trillion tax cut for Corporations & rich, by reducing the Corporate tax from 35% to 21%, which will help raising Corporate revenues by more than \$ 6 trillion over the next decade. The bill also slashed the top federal income tax rate from 39.6% to 37%. All the individual tax breaks included in the bill expire at the end of 2025, meaning that suddenly millions will face increased taxes beginning 2026. In the first year of tax "reform", middle income taxpayers will see an average cut of less than \$ 1000 while the average member of the top 1% will receive \$ 51,140. According to one analysis, 83% of the tax benefit will go to the top 1% of earners, while 53% of the population including all those making less than \$ 75,000 will pay higher taxes.
- ◆ The IMF has estimated that the global output increased by 3.7% in 2017, a 0.1%-point rise on its forecast last October and 0.5% points higher than 2016. The IMF has revised its predictions for global growth for 2018 and 2019 upward by 0.2% points to 3.9%. Since 2008 crisis, global debt ratios had surged by 51 percentage points relative to global GDP and stood at a record 327% with every part of the world economy exhibiting some form of deflation.
- ◆ Social inequality in Australia has worsened in 2016-17 according to Oxfam report. The number of Australian billionaires more than doubled over the past decade, from 14 in 2008 to 33 in 2017, with a corresponding rise in their total fortunes of almost 140% to \$ 115.4 billion.

Working Class Struggles

■ S.SRIDHARA, MYSORE

FRENCH WORKERS SUPPORT GROWING MASS STRIKES IN GERMANY:

French workers declared their solidarity on 02.02.2018 for the strike, demanding significant wage increase.

In Germany workers were in militant mood, enthusiastic about the step forward taken by the German Metal Workers and the possibility of a common European struggle for wage increase in the phase of the raising wealth of the super rich and increasing exploitation of the working class.

CHINA: Teachers protest over unpaid benefits:

Thousands of teachers, including many retired Education staff, protested in Beijing on 29th January 2018 over unpaid Pension and other benefits. The Teachers demonstrated outside the Ministry of Education demanding Re-employment for Community Teachers who had been laid off before reaching Retirement. They also called for the full payment of entitled Pension, an exemption on pension contribution for those who are legally retired and compensation payments to the families of teachers who are still due for retirement payments.

PAKISTAN RAILWAY WORKING PROTEST:

Thousands of Railway workers demonstrated outside the workshop's Divisional Superintendent's Office in Lahore on 24.01.2018 to demand permanent jobs for Contract Workers, increased pay and decent service structure. They also opposed Government moves to privatise the Railways and other public services.

SOUTH KOREA: YONSEI UNIVERSITY cleaning staff launch occupation:

Cleaning Staff are occupying Seoul's Private YONSEI UNIVERSITY, one of the oldest and most prestigious academic institution in South Korea as part of an indefinite strike launched in January 2018 against job cuts and pro-business restructuring. Hundreds of workers took over the floor lobbies of the University main building.

BRITISH COLUMBIA SAFEWAY WORKERS LOCKED OUT IN CANADA:

Super Market chain Safeway has locked out 600 workers at its premium Sobey's Location across the province of British Columbia. Workers have filed a complaint with Labour Relation

Board, accusing management of initiating an illegal Lock out. UNION is taking measures to mobilize broader support for the Locked out workers.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO: Cement Workers protest retrenchment plan:

orkers for Trinidad Cement Ltd held two early morning protest on January 29th and February 2nd 2018 in front of Company headquarters. The workers demonstrated against retrenchment.

LAI D OFF GUYANESE SUGAR WORKERS

continue severance pay protests: Hundred of retrenched Sugar plantation workers, their wives and children staged a protest on February 1st 2018 in front of Guyana's Ministry of the PRESIDENCY in the Capital Georgetown. The workers had formerly been employed at the Wales Estate where they were made redundant over a year ago when the Government closed a number of State owned Guyana Sugar Corporation Estates in the name of restructuring the sugar industry.

CHILEAN TRASH COLLECTORS STRIKE FOR BETTER WAGES AND CONDITIONS:

Sanitation Workers in the Central Chilean City of Lota walked off the work on 30.01.2018 to press the demands. The striking workers demanded a raise of wages as well as improvement in working conditions.

FAST FOOD WORKERS STRIKES IN PORILAND – OREGON:

Working at PORILAND-OREGON carried out three days strike action from 1st February 2018 to 3rd February 2018 to Demand Union recognition and seeking 5 Dollar rise per hours wages affordable health benefits, scheduling rules and maternity leave.

FOOD DELIVERY WORKERS STRIKE IN HONGKONG:

Hundreds of Workers an online food delivery company 'DELIVEROO' went on strike on 24.01.2018. The stoppage of work in response to cuts in benefits and the number of riders outside of peak hours.

SRILANKAN TRAIN DRIVERS WALK OUT:

Train Drivers from Srilanka's State owned transport Service walked off the job on 24.01.2018 against management's suspension of contract drivers and it's failure to rectify unsafe working conditions.

Rs.28.51 Lakh Cr assets

The total assets of LIC grew 16.75% to Rs 28,51,190 crore. LIC has invested Rs.70,000 crore in equities till the end of the third quarter ended December 31, 2017, and it plans to invest another Rs.10,000 crore before the end of the financial year. LIC has earned Rs.20,000 crore from sales of equity investments in the financial year till December, up from Rs.16,000 in the same period last fiscal.

19.47% Growth

New Business performance by LIC for nine months ending December 2017 has shown an impressive growth of 19.47% in its first year premium by posting a figure of Rs. 99,783.33 crore. It has already achieved its Single Premium Target for the FY 2017-2018 as on December 31, 2017. LIC, as at December end 2017 collected over Rs. 2,23,854 crore of Total Premium Income as compared to Rs. 2,00,818 crore collected during the corresponding period last year showing a very robust growth of 11.47%. LIC has covered Rs. 5.96 crore lives under its Social Security Schemes. The Corporations Gross Total Income grew to Rs. 3,78,599 crore for the period ending December 31, 2017 from Rs. 3,37,466 crore as at the last corresponding period, showing a handsome growth of over 12.19%.

Insurance penetration

The Economic Survey 2018 said insurance penetration — the ratio of premium underwritten in a given year to the gross domestic product (GDP) — in India increased to 3.49% in 2016-17 from 2.71% in 2001. It also said, Crop, motor and health insurance policies enabled the non-life insurance sector to log 33% growth in 2016-17. The insurance density in India, which was \$11.5 in 2001, has increased to \$59.7 in 2016 (life \$46.5 and general \$13.2). Insurance density is defined as the ratio of premium underwritten in a given year to the total population (measured in US\$ for convenience of international comparison).

Ombudsman appointments

IRDAI has appointed 10 of 16 vacant insurance ombudsman posts in India. For Chennai, National Insurance Company director Vasantha Krishna; for Kochi, National Insurance chairman K Sanath Kumar; for Hyderabad, Oriental Insurance Company's retired director Sujay Banerji; for Mumbai and Goa, United India Insurance former CMD Milind Kharat and for Ahmedabad and Kolkata, retired LIC officials RG Shinde and Kirti Saha respectively have been appointed. Both Sanath Kumar and Vasantha Krishnan will retire shortly and take up the new posts.

Pvt Cos Deny

Over 5000 cases of claims under crop

For our Field Force

■ ARIVUKKADAL, THANJAVUR

insurance are pending in Haryana as private insurance companies in the state are apparently using flimsy reasons to deny benefits to farmers. Following this, Haryana's agriculture and farmer welfare department had directed the insurance companies including Reliance General Insurance Company Limited, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company and ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Limited to settle these cases.

NCDRC orders HDFC

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) has ordered HDFC Standard Life Insurance company to pay Rs.2.5 lakh with 9% interest. NCDRC also noted that, the IRDAI had already ordered Rs.1 crore penalty on the same (HDFC Standard Life) insurance company for rejecting 21 claims citing the same 90 days waiting period.

Unclaimed funds

IRDAI has issued a circular directing all Life and General insurers to transfer the amounts unclaimed for more than 10 years to the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund of the Central Government before 30th Sep.2018. The circular is issued, as per the Central Government directive.

Quikr sells insurance

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance has announced a partnership with Quikr under which its insurance products will be distributed by the digital classifieds platform.

Paytm broker

Paytm is looking at a broking licence to get into trading and selling mutual funds and insurance.

Service at home

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance (BAGIC) customers who own devices powered by Amazon's Alexa — a voice assistant powered by artificial intelligence — can soon get their queries sorted and claims registered by speaking aloud their requirement.

CSCs to sell LIC Policies

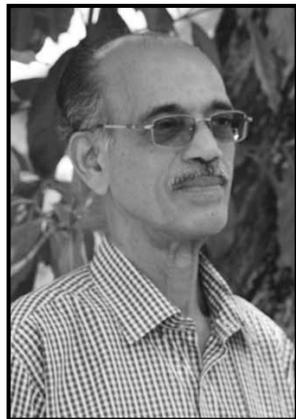
The ministry of electronics and IT (MeitY) has allowed its 2.70 lakh common service centres (CSCs) to partner with HDFC Bank and LIC for selling banking and insurance products across the country.

Daily SIP

LIC Mutual Fund has introduced a daily SIP scheme, which offers the option to invest in SIPs (systematic investment plans) with as low as Rs.300 per day which would be available in five equity schemes.

Com.K.S.Richard

is no more. He breathed his last on 24th November 2017 due to a head injury caused by a sudden fall. He was 79. He was President of AI IPA, Trivandrum Division for the last two decades. He was previously president of L I C E U Trivandrum Division for more than a decade and was its General Secretary for two terms.



Com. Richard joined L I C Udupi Division in 1963. By this time he took his Law Degree and he was student leader there. Later he took diploma in creative writing from IGNOU. In 1967 he got transfer to Trivandrum Division. It was the time of Anti Automation struggle and he straight away plunged into the movement. His first short story on automation background saw the light of the day during this period. He was the chief motivating force behind the publication of Divisional Union's mouth piece OUR VOICE which was a nightmare for the disruptive forces through the facts rich, unassailable arguments to defend the struggle against automation at the behest of AIIEA.

Insurance Worker mourns the sad demise of Com Richard and shares the grief with the bereaved family.

People for India Forum, Visakhapatnam condemns attacks on Dalits in BimaKoregaon

People for India, Visakhapatnam forum condemned the attacks on the Dalits of BimaKoregaon in Maharashtra. The protest action was organised at Dr BR Ambedkar centre, near Divisional Office Visakhapatnam. Addressing the gathering Prof KV Ramana, chairperson, PFI said that the dalits would celebrate their victory over the peshwas in Maharashtra, a century ago. The dalits of Maharashtra assemble at BimaKoregaon every year. This year the right wing extremists had attacked these dalits. Though the constitution provides for equality, the dalits are deprived and oppressed. Progressive sections across the country must condemn these attacks and the guilty must be punished severely, he said. Com Aja Sarma, Secretary Forum for Development of North Andhra, RP Raju, Secretary, KVPS, Com Ramanachalam, General Secretary, ICEU, and other fraternal organisations attended. ICEU comrades of city units attended in good numbers.



CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

Month	Base 2001	Base 1960
April	277	6322.77
May	278	6345.60
June	280	6391.25
July	285	6505.38
August	285	6505.38
September	285	6505.38
October	287	6551.03
November	288	6573.86
December	286	6528.21
Base 1960 = Base 2001 x 22.8259		

DONATIONS

Com. T.S. Sudhayani, Tripunithara Br. Ernakulam	Rs 5000
Com. K. Gunasekharan Pollachi Br. 1, Coimbatore Dn	2000
Cyril Lakrd Sambalpur Br. 1	1000
Com. Harjeet Slingh, P&GS, Ludhiana	500
Com. M. Chandan, Bangalore DO-1	5000
Com. G.N. Balaji, Delhi Br. III	500
Com. Bhuneswar Singh, Buyar Br., Patna Dn	5000
Com. Om Narayan, Patna DO-1	2000
AIIEA received a donation of Rs. 5000 from Com. G.R. Thakur, Kankar Br., Raipur Dn, on the occasion of his retirement from LIC.	
Insurance Worker thanks these comrades for their fine gesture.	

COM MOHD. AMIN



Com Mohd. Amin, former General Secretary and Vice-President, CITU passed away at Kolkata on the afternoon of February 12, 2018. He was ninety years old.

Mohd. Amin was born in Kolkata to poor parents who had migrated from Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Lack of formal education and poverty led Amin to start work at the young age of 14 in a jute mill.

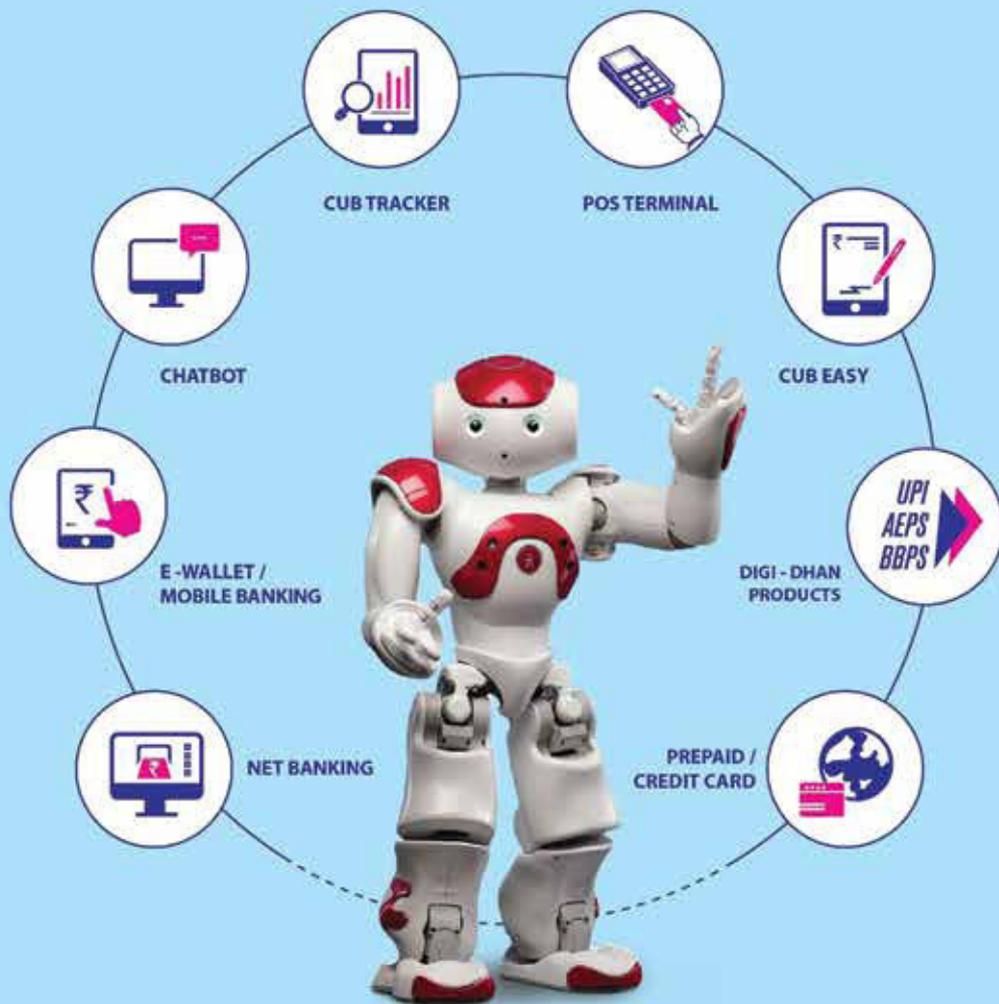
He joined the trade union movement and became a member of the Bengal Jute Mill Mazdoor Union. By the end of the Second World War, he was attracted to communism and joined the Communist Party in 1946. In the immediate post-Partition period he moved to erstwhile East Pakistan on the instructions of the Party. He was imprisoned for taking the lead in organising movements there. After his release he shifted back to West Bengal. Com Amin organised jute mill, beedi and other workers in the Barrackpore industrial belt. All through his life he championed the cause of the working class.

Com Amin served as a Minister both in the United Front and the Left Front Government. He also represented the CPI(M) in the Rajya Sabha. He had also served as a PB Member of the CPI(M). During the course of his political life, Mohd. Amin spent a total of two years in jail and was underground for an equal period.

Com Amin had a close association with the AllIEA. In the death of Com Amin, the working class of India has lost a valiant leader. Insurance Worker deeply condoles the death of Com Amin and shares grief with the bereaved family.

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