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₹ 27,000 Cr.

60,000 Cr.

88% LS Members
Crorepatis
Average assets of
Ministers 21 Cr

**SAVE DEMOCRACY
from MONEY POWER**

**AIIEA at Sixtyeight
Glorious Journey Continues**



Surgical Strike on Employment

**Democracy can
die in daylight too**



**Undermining Rudiments
of Economics**



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URGENT NEED FOR ELECTORAL REFORMS IN INDIA Democracy has become Hostage to Money Power

Elections to the 17th Lok Sabha are over now. The BJP led NDA is back in the saddle with a thumping majority. Aside from the huge margin of the NDA's victory, this election stands out as a unique one for so many other reasons. The numbers associated with this election are staggering: 900 million eligible voters, a million voting booths, 10 million election officials, an expected 10,000 candidates for 545 seats and more than 500 political parties in the fray. The poll process was stretched over almost 75 days and polling took place in seven phases. This 2019 election in India has acquired the dubious distinction of being the most expensive election ever, anywhere. As per estimates of Delhi based thinktank CMS, the total expenditure incurred is of the order of Rs.60,000 crore; out of which the BJP alone accounts for around Rs.27,000 crore! On an average, roughly Rs.100 crores were spent per Lok Sabha constituency. Between 1998 and 2019 six Lok Sabha elections have taken place. During this period the election expenditure

had gone up by around six times from Rs.9000 crore to Rs.60,000 crore. It is interesting to note that the Election Commission of India have seized a sum of Rs.3377 crore during the campaign period of this election, which is three times the amount seized in the 2014 elections. It is thus clear that elections in India have become skewed towards those with more money.

This overarching influence of money in politics is clearly visible in the composition of the present government. According to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), the average assets of the 25 cabinet ministers of the Modi government are Rs.21.7 crore. In terms of the assets that have been declared, Harsimrat Kaur Badal is the richest minister with assets of Rs.217 crore. Piyush Goyal, the Railways minister is the second with assets of Rs.95 crore. Rao Inderjit Singh at Rs.42 crore and Amit Shah at Rs.40 crore are the third and fourth. Of the 542 elected MPs, 475 or 88% are crorepatris. According to the analysis made

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by ADR, the success rate of candidates with total assets of less than Rs.10 lakh was mere 0.3% whereas the success rate for those with assets of over Rs.5 crore was more than 30%. These figures clearly demonstrate that the chances for the richer candidates are brighter compared to those from humble backgrounds. Along with the increasing criminalisation of politics, brazen use of money power is posing serious challenges to Indian democracy and needs urgent reforms.

Election time expenditure is the mother of all corruption in India. It is therefore important to know the precise source of election funding. It is an open secret that the biggest chunk of election funding in India comes by way of corporate funding to political parties. Since corporates are the biggest donors to political parties, contesting elections has now become sort of a business enterprise. In a democracy, elected representatives are the agents of the people. Whoever is elected by the people must act in the best interest of those people. Unfortunately it is not so. When corporates give huge funds to candidates and political parties for their election campaign, they consider it as a form of investment. Like any other investment decision, they expect a good return from this investment too. That creates the whole trouble. When big corporates (and not the people) become the 'principal' and elected representatives become the 'agent', the agent tries to frame policies in the best interest of his principal i.e. the corporates. It can therefore be said that these corporates constitute the 'supply side' of corruption which is eating into the vitals of our system. The most pressing electoral reform that is needed today is to ban corporate funding altogether. State funding of elections is one important factor in cleaning up the electoral system in India. State funding of elections has also been suggested by the Dinesh Goswami Committee and Inderjit Gupta Committee. The corporates, like any other sections of the society, can be asked to pay a part of their profits towards a state fund set aside for electoral funding.

The Modi government introduced the system of Electoral Bonds which served to compound matters rather than bring about transparency in electoral funding. Electoral bonds are a deeply regressive move because they literally make the donor, donee and the amount donated a secret. According to one former bureaucrat and a leading columnist "The electoral bond is a strange beast. It

is a bond that carries no interest, but is comparable to a junk bond. It combines the promise of high returns to the investor in the immediate term with high risk, but the risk inherent in this instrument is borne by the society." The introduction of electoral bonds has led to a spurt in corporate funding of political parties rather than curbing it. It is reported that the sales in the first tranche of March 2018 totalled Rs.222 crore, of which the BJP got Rs.210 crore and the Congress Rs.5 crore. During 2018-19, electoral bonds worth Rs.834.7 crore were sold in five tranches up to November 2018. India has always been wary of foreign influence in its democratic processes. Section 29 B of the Representation of Peoples Act therefore bars political parties from accepting contributions from any foreign source as defined in the Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act 2010. It is however unfortunate that the Modi government amended the FCRA Act retrospectively and made it possible for foreign funds to fill the coffers of the political parties. At a time when state funding of elections seemed to be the answer to corruption through corporate funding, the BJP government has done just the opposite of what was needed and vitiated the atmosphere.

Curiously, according to the prevailing laws in India while there is a limit on the amount that candidates can spend there is no such limit on the amount that political parties can spend. This makes the ceiling on election expenditure practically useless. This has to change.

Apart from state funding of elections another reform that is overdue is the introduction of proportional representation system. The present first-past-the-post system seems to encourage polarisation and in a multi corner contest even a low vote share is enough to get one elected. The biggest drawback of the present system is that there is a non-linear relationship between vote share and seat share. At times even a 1% vote swing can increase a party's seat share by 10-15%. A classic example in this context is that of the BSP which got 20% of the votes in Uttar Pradesh in 2014 but failed to get even a single seat. This is a system where the 'winner takes it all' even when majority of electorate do not favour the winning candidate. On the other hand, the proportional representation system is a far more representative than the first-past-the-post system. In a proportional

representation system, the distribution of seats corresponds closely with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party.

While it is alright to brand parliamentary elections as the celebration of democracy, we must also realise that it is not possible for any ordinary citizen of this country or any poor political party to participate in this biggest

democratic fair. When contesting elections becomes a business enterprise possible only for the rich and super rich, one has to wonder whether India is still a democracy or is slowly lurching towards a plutocracy. It is time Indian society seriously debates on electoral reforms so that our democracy is not robbed off its democratic content. ●

भारत में चुनाव सुधारों की तत्काल आवश्यकता लोकतंत्र बना धन शक्ति का बंधक

17वीं लोकसभा के चुनाव अब खत्म हो चुके हैं। बीजेपी के नेतृत्व वाला एनडीए प्रचंड बहुमत के साथ शासन के लिए वापस आ गया है। एनडीए की जीत के बहुत बड़े अंतर के अलावा, यह चुनाव कई अन्य कारणों से भी अद्वितीय रूप से अलग है। इस चुनाव से जुड़ी संख्याएँ चौंकाने वाली रही हैं ; 900 मिलियन योग्य मतदाता, एक मिलियन वोटिंग बूथ, 10 मिलियन चुनाव अधिकारी, 545 सीटों के लिए 10,000 उम्मीदवार और चुनावी मैदान में 500 से अधिक राजनीतिक दल। मतदान प्रक्रिया लगभग 75 दिनों तक लम्बी खिंची और मतदान सात चरणों में पूरा हुआ। भारत में हुए इस 2019 चुनाव ने कभी भी और कहीं भी हुए अब तक के सबसे मंहगे चुनाव की अविश्वसनीय विशिष्टता हासिल कर ली है। दिल्ली स्थित प्रबुद्ध विशेषज्ञ दल "सीएमएस" के अनुमान के अनुसार, चुनावों का कुल व्यय 60,000 करोड़ रुपये का है ; जिसमें से अकेले बीजेपी का ही लगभग 27,000 करोड़ रुपये है। औसतन प्रत्येक लोकसभा क्षेत्र में लगभग 100 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए। 1998 से 2019 के बीच छः लोकसभा चुनाव हुए हैं। इस अवधि के दौरान चुनावी खर्च लगभग छः गुना बढ़कर 9,000 करोड़ रुपये से 60,000 करोड़ रुपये हो गया। यह ध्यान रखना दिलचस्प है कि भारत के चुनाव आयोग ने इस चुनाव की प्रचार अवधि के दौरान 3377 करोड़ रुपये की राशि जब्त की है, जो 2014 के चुनावों में जब्त की गई राशि का तीन गुना है। इस प्रकार यह स्पष्ट है कि भारत में चुनाव अधिक पैसे वाले लोगों के पक्ष में झुके हुए हो गए हैं।

राजनीति में धन का यह व्यापक प्रभाव वर्तमान सरकार की रचना में स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाई देता है। एसोसिएशन फॉर डेमोक्रेटिक रिफॉर्म (एडीआर) के अनुसार, मोदी सरकार के 25 कैबिनेट मंत्रियों की औसत संपत्ति 21.7 करोड़ रुपये है। घोषित की गई संपत्ति के संदर्भ में, हरसिमरत कौर बादल, 217 करोड़ रुपये की संपत्ति के साथ सबसे अमीर मंत्री हैं। पीयूष गोयल, रेल मंत्री 95 करोड़ की संपत्ति के साथ दूसरे स्थान पर हैं। राव इंद्रजीत सिंह 42 करोड़ रुपये और अमित शाह 40 करोड़ रुपये के साथ तीसरे और चौथे स्थान पर हैं। चुने गए 542 सांसदों में से 475 या 88 प्रतिशत करोड़पति हैं। एडीआर द्वारा किए गए विश्लेषण के अनुसार, 10 लाख रुपये से कम की कुल संपत्ति वाले उम्मीदवारों की सफलता दर केवल 0.3 प्रतिशत थी, जबकि 5 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की संपत्ति वाले लोगों के लिए सफलता की दर 30 प्रतिशत से अधिक थी। ये आंकड़े स्पष्ट रूप से प्रदर्शित करते हैं कि अमीर उम्मीदवारों के लिए संभावना कमजोर पृष्ठभूमि के लोगों की तुलना में अधिक उज्ज्वल है। राजनीति के बढ़ते अपराधीकरण के साथ, धन शक्ति का बेशर्मा इस्तेमाल भारतीय लोकतंत्र के लिए गंभीर चुनौती है और इसमें तत्काल सुधार की आवश्यकता है।

चुनाव के समय के खर्च भारत में सभी भ्रष्टाचारों की जननी

है। इसलिए चुनाव फंडिंग के सटीक स्रोत को जानना महत्वपूर्ण है। यह एक जगजाहिर रहस्य है कि भारत में चुनावी फंडिंग का सबसे बड़ा हिस्सा कारपोरेट फंडिंग के माध्यम से राजनीतिक दलों को मिलता है। चूंकि बड़े औद्योगिक घराने राजनीतिक दलों के सबसे बड़े दानदाता हैं, इसलिए चुनाव लड़ना अब एक व्यावसायिक उद्यम की तरह हो गया है। लोकतंत्र में, चुने हुए प्रतिनिधि जनता के एजेंट होते हैं। जो कोई भी लोगों द्वारा चुना गया है, उसे उन्हीं लोगों के सर्वोच्च हित में कार्य करना चाहिए। दुर्भाग्य से ऐसा होता नहीं है। जब व्यावसायिक घराने चुनाव अभियान के लिए उम्मीदवारों और राजनीतिक दलों को भारी मात्रा में धन देते हैं, तो वे इसे निवेश का एक रूप मानते हैं। किसी भी अन्य निवेश निर्णय की तरह, वे इस निवेश से भी अच्छे प्रतिफल की उम्मीद करते हैं। जो सारी परेशानी पैदा करता है। जब बड़े कारपोरेट (और जनता नहीं) "प्रिंसिपल" बन जाते हैं और चुने हुए प्रतिनिधि "एजेंट" बन जाते हैं, तो एजेंट अपने प्रिंसिपल यानी कारपोरेट्स के सर्वोच्च हित में नीतियों को लागू करने की कोशिश करता है। इसलिए यह कहा जा सकता है कि ये कारपोरेट भ्रष्टाचार के "आपूर्ति पक्ष" का गठन करते हैं जो हमारी व्यवस्था के सबसे महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सों को खा रहा है। आज के समय का अत्यंत आवश्यक चुनावी सुधार जिसकी आज सबसे अधिक जरूरत है, वो है कारपोरेट फंडिंग पर पूरी तरह से प्रतिबंध लगाना। भारत में निर्वाचन प्रणाली को साफ करने के लिए चुनाव का राज्य वित्त पोषण एक महत्वपूर्ण तरीका है। दिनेश गोस्वामी समिति और इंद्रजीत गुप्ता समिति द्वारा भी चुनाव को राज्य निधि से कराने का सुझाव दिया जा चुका है। कारपोरेट्स से, समाज के अन्य वर्गों की तरह ही, अपने लाभ का एक हिस्सा अलग से बनाए गए राज्य कोष में चुनावी फंडिंग के लिए देने को कहा जा सकता है।

मोदी सरकार ने चुनावी बांड की प्रणाली शुरू की जिसने चुनावी फंडिंग में पारदर्शिता लाने के बजाए मामले को और उलझा दिया। इलेक्ट्रॉनल बाण्ड एक गहरा प्रतिगामी कदम है क्योंकि यह वस्तुतः दान देने वाले, दान लेने वाले और दान राशि को गोपनीय बना देता है। एक पूर्व नौकरशाह और एक प्रमुख स्तंभकार के अनुसार "चुनावी बांड एक अजीब जानवर है। यह एक ऐसा बाण्ड है जिसमें कोई रुचि नहीं रखता, सिर्फ कबाड बाण्ड से तुलना की जा सकती है। यह उच्च जोखिम के साथ तात्कालिक अवधि में निवेशक को ऊँचे प्रतिफल का वादा करता है, लेकिन इस साधन में निहित जोखिम समाज वहन करता है।" चुनावी बाण्ड के अमल में आने के बाद से राजनीतिक दलों के कारपोरेट फंडिंग में अंकुश लगने के बजाए इसमें तेजी आई है। यह बताया गया है कि मार्च 2018 की पहली किश्त में कुल 222 करोड़ रुपये की बिक्री हुई, जिसमें से भाजपा को 210 करोड़ रुपये और कांग्रेस को 5 करोड़ रुपये मिले। 2018-19 के दौरान, नवम्बर

2018 तक पांच बार में 834.7 करोड़ रुपये के इलेक्टोरल बॉण्ड बेचे गए। भारत अपनी लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रियाओं में विदेशी प्रभाव से हमेशा सतर्क रहा है। इसीलिए जन प्रतिनिधित्व एक्ट की धारा 29 बी राजनीतिक दलों को किसी भी विदेशी स्रोत से मिलने वाले योगदान, जैसा कि विदेशी योगदान (विनियमन) अधिनियम 2010 में परिभाषित किया गया है, स्वीकार करने से रोकती है। यह हालांकि दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि मोदी सरकार ने एफसीआरए अधिनियम में पिछली तारीख से लागू होने वाला संशोधन किया और विदेशी निधियों से राजनीतिक पार्टियों के कोषों को भरना संभव बनाया। ऐसे समय में जब राजकीय वित्त पोषण के माध्यम से चुनाव कराया जाना कारपोरेट फंडिंग के माध्यम से हो रहे भ्रष्टाचार का जवाब लगती है, भाजपा सरकार ने इस जरूरी काम के ठीक विपरीत काम किया और माहौल को दूषित कर दिया।

यह दिलचस्प है कि भारत में प्रचलित कानूनों के अनुसार उम्मीदवार द्वारा खर्च कर सकने की एक सीमा निर्धारित है लेकिन राजनीतिक दलों के खर्च की राशि की कोई सीमा तय नहीं है। यह चुनावी खर्च की सीमा को व्यावहारिक रूप से बेकार बना देता है। इसे बदलना होगा।

चुनावों के राज्य वित्त पोषण के अलावा एक और सुधार जो अतिदेय है, वो है आनुपातिक प्रतिनिधित्व प्रणाली की शुरुआत। वर्तमान फ्रस्ट-पास्ट-द-पोस्ट तरीका धुवीकरण को प्रोत्साहित करने वाला प्रतीत होता है और एक बहुष्काणीय चुनाव में निर्वाचित होने के लिए कम वोट शेयर भी पर्याप्त होता है। वर्तमान प्रणाली का सबसे बड़ा दोष यह है कि वोट शेयर और सीट शेयर के

बीच एक विषम संबंध है। कभी-कभी 1 प्रतिशत वोट स्विंग से भी पार्टी की सीट की हिस्सेदारी 10-15 प्रतिशत बढ़ सकती है। इस संदर्भ में एक उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण बीएसपी का है जिसे 2014 में उत्तर प्रदेश में 20 प्रतिशत वोट मिले थे लेकिन वह एक भी सीट जीत पाने में असफल रही। यह एक ऐसी प्रणाली है जहां "विजेता को सब कुछ मिल जाता है" ऐसा तब भी होता है जब अधिकांश मतदाता जीतने वाले उम्मीदवार के पक्ष में मत नहीं देते हैं। दूसरी ओर, आनुपातिक प्रतिनिधित्व प्रणाली, फ्रस्ट-पास्ट-द-पोस्ट प्रणाली की तुलना में कहीं अधिक प्रतिनिधित्व प्रदान करती है। आनुपातिक प्रतिनिधित्व प्रणाली में, सीटों का वितरण प्रत्येक पार्टी के लिए डाले गए कुल वोटों के अनुपात के साथ समान रूप से मेल खाता है।

जब संसदीय चुनावों को प्रजातन्त्र के उत्सव के रूप में मानना अच्छा है, तब हमें यह भी महसूस करना चाहिए कि इस देश के किसी भी सामान्य नागरिक या किसी भी गरीब राजनीतिक दल के लिए इस सबसे बड़े लोकतांत्रिक मेले में भाग लेना संभव नहीं है। जब चुनाव लड़ना केवल एक व्यावसायिक उद्यम बन कर रह जाता है जो किसी अमीर और सुपर अमीर के लिए ही संभव है, तो किसी को आश्चर्य होगा कि क्या भारत अभी भी एक लोकतंत्र है या धीरे-धीरे एक धनिकराज्यतंत्र में तब्दील होता जा रहा है। यह समय है जब भारतीय समाज गंभीरता से चुनावी सुधारों पर बहस करे ताकि हमारे लोकतंत्र में से लोकतंत्र का मूलविचार-मूलतत्व ही न लुट जाए।

Girish Karnad....not just a literary and theatre personality.....

Girish Karnad, the towering literary and theatre personality of our times passed away in Bangalore on 10th June 2019. He was 81 and ailing for the last few years.

He was conferred Padma Bhushan in 1992 in recognition of his contributions to arts. He was the recipient of Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary honour in 1999 for his contributions to literature and theatre.

Karnad's acting and screenwriting debut came in 1970 in the Kannada film *Samskara* (1970), which is based on a novel by UR Ananthamurthy. The film won the first President's Golden Lotus Award for Kannada cinema. There was no looking back thereafter and Karnad continued to produce great work as a playwright and acted in a number of memorable films both in Kannada and Hindi.

Karnad has written numerous plays in



Kannada and is considered one of Kannada literature's foremost playwrights. His most famous include *Yayati* in 1961, *Hayavadana* in 1972 and *Nagamandala* in 1988. *Tughlaq*, a play he wrote in 1964, made Karnad a name to reckon with among playwrights in the country.

Girish Karnad was not just a literary and theatre personality; he was an active voice against polarisation of Indian society on communal and caste lines. He stood for the unity of the people and raised powerful voice against exploitation of all kinds. He was very critical of the forces of extreme right responsible for killing of powerful voices like Gauri Lankesh, Govind Pansare and Dhabholkar. This was not taken kindly by these hindutva forces and he was often abused, threatened and was on their hit list.

Karnad was a friend of insurance employees. He lent support to the struggle of AIIEA against Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill and was one of the first signatories in a memorandum against privatisation of LIC and PSGI companies.

The AIIEA and Insurance Worker deeply condole the sad demise of Girish Karnad and shares the grief with his wife Saraswathi, daughter Shalmali Radha, son Raghu Karnad and tens of thousands of his admirers across the country.

COM B.MADHAVA



Com B. Madhava, a frontline leader of insurance employees' movement passed away in the early hours of 19th June 2019 at Mangalore. He was ailing for the last few years. He is survived by his wife and a son.

Com Madhava served Insurance Employees Union, Udupi as its President for over a decade. He was also the Vice-President of SZIEF for a term. Com Madhava inspired a large number of cadres across the State of Karnataka and made immense contribution to the growth of the organisation. Com Madhava took voluntary retirement from LIC to serve the greater cause of the working class. He organised the tile and beedi workers who were the most exploited sections of the working class. He served the CITU, Karnataka in various capacities and worked as a Member of the Secretariat of CPI (M), Karnataka State Committee for a long time.

Com Madhava contested both Assembly and Parliamentary elections as a candidate of CPI (M) from Mangalore and secured respectable number of votes. As a leading trade union leader of Karnataka, he represented the CITU in many international conferences and visited countries like former USSR and Greece.

The working class and the insurance employees have lost a great leader in the death of Com Madhava. His political beliefs and commitment to the cause of the exploited will continue to inspire the movement of insurance employees in Karnataka. The All India Insurance Employees' Association and Insurance Worker mourn the sad demise of Com Madhava and share the grief with the bereaved family.

Long Live Com Madhava

TRANSFER FROM PF TO FUND PENSION COST

The AIIEA had suggested that the employees opting for final pension option should be allowed to transfer funds from their accumulations in the PF if they so desire to meet the cost of Pension which is 3.7 times the Pay as on 1.3.2019. Com H.I Bhat, Joint Secretary, AIIEA who is a Member of the PF Trust had also written a letter in this regard to the Chairman LIC who is the Chief Trustee.

The issue came up for discussions in the meeting of the PF Trust held on 15th June 2019. Com Bhat pressed for this demand. There was a broad consensus that employees

can be allowed this facility. However, this requires a formal approval from the Income Tax authorities as PF accumulations enjoy tax benefits. The Trustees decided to take up the matter with the IT authorities.

The AIIEA has also been raising a demand for a very long time that employees who are at present covered under Defined Contribution Pension Scheme be allowed to make savings under Provident Fund on voluntary basis. This issue also came up for discussions. It was decided to take a legal opinion on this demand before taking a final decision.

AIIEA writes to Finance Minister on Issues of Public Sector Insurance Industry

All India Insurance Employees' Association has written to the new Minister of Finance, Smt. Nirmala Sitaraman on 17th June 2019 on the issues concerning the public sector insurance industry. We give below the full text of the letter:

"We take this opportunity to congratulate you on your taking over as Union Minister for Finance. We hope under your able leadership, the economic growth will be inclusive and development will benefit all sections especially more vulnerable sections of our population.

We would like to inform you that All India Insurance Employees' Association (AIIEA) is the oldest and the biggest trade union of public sector insurance employees. It has been playing a very constructive role in the promotion of the interests of LIC and Public Sector General Insurance companies and helping these institutions to fulfil the social obligations.

The public sector insurance industry is facing certain problems today that are inhibiting its potential for growth and consequently its contribution to the national development. There are also some employee related issues which need early resolution to motivate the workforce to rise up to meet the challenges of a very competitive environment. We list below some of the issues for your urgent consideration.

WITHDRAWAL OF GST ON LIFE AND MEDICAL INSURANCE PREMIUM

The Life insurance premiums attract GST at the rate of 18 percent. Similarly the GST rate for medical insurance premium too is at 18 percent. We have in the past raised the demand for withdrawal of the GST on these two segments of insurance businesses on sound reasoning. Levying GST on life insurance premium means levying tax on the uncertainties of life. The person who covers the risk of life's uncertainties to give some protection to the family should not be levied tax on the premium to purchase cover against this risk. Similarly, when the public spending on health is on the decline, the premiums paid to purchase a medical and sickness insurance should not be charged the GST. We would like to point out that the GST charged on life and medical insurance premiums are way above the rates at which gold and diamonds are

taxed. The high rate of GST is also retarding the growth in premium earnings that basically go to fund the infrastructure and social sector. We, therefore, request you to re-examine the issue and withdraw the GST on life and medical insurance premiums.

SEPARATE INCOME TAX EXEMPTION LIMITS

At present the life insurance premiums are grouped together with other forms of savings for the purpose of income tax relief under Section 80 (C). We have been suggesting that life insurance premium need separate exemption limits considering the fact that they provide long term capital for social and infrastructure development. Though significant part of our population is covered through individual and group insurances, it is seen that there is a huge insurance protection gap. Those who have insurance policies are not adequately covered. In order to encourage new insurances and adequate protection to the existing insured, it is necessary to have a separate and substantial exemption limits for life insurance premiums. We request you to kindly consider this.

FUNCTIONAL AUTONOMY

LIC and PSGI companies are Board managed. They have been functioning well. This is reflected in the growth of these institutions and their contribution to the nation building activities. The growth and prosperity of these institutions critically depends upon the satisfaction level of the work force. We, therefore, request you to grant functional autonomy to LIC and PSGI companies on decisions relating to wage, amenities and service conditions for amicable resolution of these issues.

WAGE REVISION

The Wage Revision in LIC and PSGI industry has fallen due from 1.8.2017. We have raised a demand for upward revision of wages commensurate with the growth and

paying capacity of the institutions. Some progress has been made in LIC on the issue of wage revision but there is no progress in the General Insurance Industry. Since the last wage revision in 2012, these institutions have registered remarkable progress. There is huge increase in the productivity of the employees. Servicing standards have further improved. In this background the demand for wage revision based on the performance of the public sector insurance industry is fully justified. We, therefore, request you to advise LIC and GIPSA to conduct negotiations on wage revision with meaningful offers based on the strength of the institutions without the influence of external factors to arrive at an amicable settlement at the earliest.

PENSION

1. The Pension in insurance industry was introduced in the year 1995 on the lines of the Central Government Pension Scheme. The Pension is revised in the Central Government whenever the salaries are revised on the recommendation of the Pay Commission. Recently, the government allowed updation of

Pension in Reserve Bank too. We would like to inform you that pensions are not revised in LIC and GIPSA companies. We have been requesting for updation of pension whenever wage revision takes place in these institutions. Unfortunately, this genuine demand is not being considered. We, therefore, seek your intervention with a request to allow updation of pension as it is being done in the central government and the RBI.

2. The family pension in Central Government and RBI is revised to 30% of the Pay while it remains at 15% in LIC and GIPSA companies. We request you to allow the increase in family pension in these institutions on the lines of Central Government and RBI schemes.

3. The defined benefit pension scheme is withdrawn for the employees joining these institutions on or after 1.4.2010. This has created two classes of employees in these institutions. We request you to allow the employees who joined services after 1.4.2010 the benefit of defined benefit pension scheme.

We hope you will consider our representations on the above issues favourably.”

CENTRAL TRADE UNIONS RAISE WORKERS' DEMANDS

The Finance Ministry held pre budget consultations with Central Trade Unions on 15th June 2019. Shri Anurag Thakur, Minister of State along with senior officials represented the Ministry. The trade unions expressed unhappiness that the Finance Minister was not present in these consultations

The Unions pointed out that in the government did not accommodate their suggestions in the consultations held earlier. The workers who create the wealth are the real strength of the nation and therefore, their voices must be heard and find reflection in the policy making.

The Central Trade unions demanded the government to raise the minimum wage to Rs 20,000, provide 200 days of assured work under the rural employment guarantee scheme and ensure minimum monthly pension of Rs 6,000.

The unions also demanded hiking slabs for exemption of income tax for salaried persons and pensioners to Rs 10 lakh per year. They asked for Rs 8 lakh income tax slab

for senior citizens and exemption of all perks and fringe benefits like housing, medical and education facilities and running allowances from income tax.

The representatives of central trade unions expressed reservation against the policy of privatisation and divestment in profit-making public sector undertakings and stressed on increasing investment for job creation. Besides they opposed the consolidation of 44 labour laws into four codes which is an attempt to make labour laws employer friendly.

Other demands raised included conversion of casual/contractual workers to formalised employment; increase in allocations on social sector and basic essential services like health, education and food security; extension of MGNREGA to remaining all rural areas and introducing it in urban areas besides increasing number of workdays under the scheme to 200 days and creation of National Fund for Unorganised Workers to provide social security.

DEFEND THE INDUSTRY DEFEND UNITY OF WORKING CLASS

AIIEA Secretariat charts out Vision of the Organisation

The Secretariat of AIIEA met at Goa on 8-9 June 2019. This meeting of the Secretariat was convened to review the progress on developments relating to issues of employees and the industry in the background of the current political situation. It was for the first time that the Goa divisional unit of AIIEA hosted any all India event of the AIIEA. A sense of jubilation and enthusiasm was clearly visible among the rank and file of the Goa divisional unit.

The Secretariat noted with satisfaction that the period since the last Secretariat meeting in January had been a period of phenomenal progress for the employees of public sector insurance industry. The Hyderabad Secretariat meeting had planned agitations on two important issues of the employees namely final option for pension and wage revision. The Secretariat drew satisfaction from the fact that while the final pension option is secured, there was a breakthrough on the question of wage revision. The meeting of the Secretariat congratulated the employees for securing the long pending demand of the final option on pension after a protracted struggle of over one decade. The Secretariat noted that the Vajpayee led BJP government took a policy decision in 2004 to put an end to the defined

benefit pension scheme for central and state government employees. However the AIIEA had forced the managements of public sector insurance companies to hold their ground and continue with the defined benefit pension scheme till up to 31st March 2010. The arbitrary ending of the defined benefit scheme with the NPS for those joining the services after 1.4.2010 was responded by a strike action by the AIIEA and thereafter a movement was developed on the issue of Final option for 1995 Pension Scheme to those who had not joined the scheme earlier. Simultaneously the AIIEA also has been making efforts to build up a broader movement of employees of Central and State Governments and banking industry for the replacement of NPS with the defined benefit schemes for those who joined the industry after 1.4.2010. The Secretariat felt that the achievement of final option for pension was particularly noteworthy because this was secured at a time when defined benefit pension schemes are under attack all over the world. The Secretariat also noted that when the government finally agreed to the recommendations of LIC and GIPSA for giving a Final Option, it was not graceful enough to concede this benefit without imposing costs on employees as recommended by LIC and



GIPSA. Despite this the Secretariat noted that this is a great achievement considering the policy of the government on pension schemes. The meeting called upon all the existing PF optees and retired employees not to let go of this opportunity and exercise their options for Pension at the earliest.

The Secretariat expressed its satisfaction over the fact that on the question of wage revision also there were some positive developments. It was noted that the tactical line developed by the Hyderabad Secretariat meeting in January had yielded concrete results. While appreciating the initial offer of 10 per cent wage hike made by the LIC management in the first round of negotiations, the meeting reiterated that this falls short of expectations and paying capacity of the institution. Though negotiations were called by GIPSA, no offers were made. The meeting decided that GIPSA management should be impressed upon the need to come out with concrete offers early. The meeting also made it clear that the wage revision in LIC and public sector general insurance companies should be on the basis of the strength of the institutions and be independent of developments taking place in analogous institutions.

The Secretariat meeting noted with satisfaction that AIIEA's long pending demand of Recruitment to Class III cadres in LIC was going to materialise soon by way of recruitment of around 8000 Assistants. It was decided that AIIEA would bring necessary pressure for recruitment to Class IV cadres in LIC as well in view of the fast depleting staff strength in this cadre. On this issue, AIIEA also has to confront the policy of the government for abolition of Class IV posts.

The Secretariat meeting noted that both LIC and PSGI companies have registered impressive progress in the financial year 2018-19. However, it expressed concern over the decline in market share of LIC in new business premium and felt that LIC must draw proper strategies to regain the share so as to continue to dominate the market in all segments of the businesses. The meeting felt that there was an urgent

The Secretariat decided to organise an All India Working Women's Convention at Bengaluru on the 11th of August 2019 and requested the convenors/co-convenors of all zonal women sub-committees and/or state level women's sub-committees and convenors of all divisional level women's convenors to participate.

The Secretariat also finalised the dates of the ensuing 25th General Conference of the AIIEA to be held at Vishakhapatnam. It was decided that the Conference would be held from 27-30 January 2020 and called upon all units to support the host unit and contribute to the success of Conference.

need to arrest the decline in persistency ratio and take measures to augment collection of renewal premium income. Expressing serious concern over the stagnant position in number of policies in the last couple of years the meeting called upon the divisional and zonal units to chalk out concrete campaign programmes aimed at revival of lapsed policies and improvement in servicing related aspects. The meeting also underscored the need of increasing the market share and profitability of public sector general insurance companies by giving a thrust to retail business and adopting prudent underwriting methods.

The Secretariat meeting was of the unanimous view that the results of the Lok Sabha elections have reduced the space for struggle and dissent. It noted with concern the undermining of democratic institutions set up as checks and balances in Indian democracy. Now that the elections are over, it is the responsibility of the leaders of the government to put an end to divisive and hate campaign and work on an inclusive agenda



AIEA Secretariat charts out Vision of the Organisation

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for economic and social development of our society. The Secretariat firmly believes that unity of workers is essential to advance their interests and therefore it expressed hope and confidence that the working class will defend our constitutional values, the rich diversities, cultural, religious and linguistic pluralities to defend the unity of the working class and the nation.

The Secretariat noted that the Indian economy is going through a difficult period. The growth is declining and inequalities increasing. Economy cannot run and sustain itself on the basis of the consumption needs of a narrow section of the population. Therefore, the government must take immediate steps to reorient the policy to include all citizens in the process of development. The Secretariat noted with concern the announcement of the decision to privatise the public sector units, bring legislations to amend labour laws in favour of the employers and make land acquisition easy. The experience around the world clearly demonstrates that these policies fail to solve the crisis in economies. The government which refuses to raise resources through taxing the rich and attacking the black money finds it convenient to raise resources through sale of public sector units. This policy poses a serious threat to LIC and therefore the Secretariat appeals to all insurance employees to remain vigilant to thwart any attempt towards disinvestment in LIC. The Secretariat also decided to continue resistance to the privatisation of PSGI companies.

The Secretariat had a serious discussion on employees' issues like PLLI, CGIT, Ex

Servicemen's fixation issue, Five Day Week, Sports Policy of LIC, enhancement of the allowance payable to physically challenged employees, improvements in family pension, updation of pension with wage revision, improvements in Mediclaim, inclusion of left out retired employees in the group Mediclaim policy etc. and decided to pursue these issues with the managements till their resolution.

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The Secretariat placed on records its deep appreciation and gratitude to the comrades of ICEU Goa Division for their untiring efforts in organising the meeting in a splendid manner. The meeting of the Secretariat was followed by an impressive employees' meeting which was attended by a large number of employees, officers and retired employees.

The Secretariat is aware that the present times are challenging but has full confidence that insurance employees will overcome these challenges through their grit, determination, faith in struggles and courage of conviction





AIIEA AT SIXTY EIGHT GLORIOUS JOURNEY CONTINUES

जिस दिन से चला हूँ मेरी मंज़िल पे नज़र है
आँखों ने कभी मील का पत्थर नहीं देखा
*Time the journey began,
we remained focussed on destination
Eyes have never seen
crossing of many a milestone*

Amanulla Khan

These two beautiful lines of Bashir Badr correctly describe the sixty eight year glorious journey of AIIEA. The AIIEA took birth in 1951 not only to free the insurance employees from the then prevailing gruelling and exploitative working conditions and enhance their living standards but also to contribute to the ideals of construction of a just equal and fair society. The AIIEA remained steadfast to these lofty and noble ideals of the working class in its inspiring journey of the last sixty eight years. The AIIEA did not rest or pause after achieving great victories and the journey continued traversing through tortuous paths. The uncompromising struggles to advance the interests of the insurance employees while remaining committed to the ideals of the working class has made AIIEA a unique trade union commanding respect and admiration of the national and international trade unions movements.

The year which has just gone into history has been very rewarding for insurance employees. In this year AIIEA took another gigantic step towards further enhancing the life and living standards of the insurance employees. The decade long demand and

struggles for a final pension option to those who failed to exercise their options in 1995 and 1997 to the LIC and GIC Employees' Pension Schemes 1995 was finally secured. This was no easy task. It required pushing back policy of the government not to reopen the defined benefit pension scheme for various sections of the employees in different sectors of the government. This trend is seen across the world where capitalism is struggling to come out of crisis since the global financial meltdown. The Governments are of the view that defined benefit pension schemes are not sustainable due to increase in life span, reducing interest rates and the resultant hike in the annuity prices. It is clear that a final pension option has been secured in the most hostile political and economic environment. This great achievement once again vindicates the faith of AIIEA in struggles and need to be celebrated. In the last one year, the AIIEA could also secure many monetary benefits for the insurance employees enhancing their quality of life.

The AIIEA did not confine itself to the economic demands within the industry. It also carried out a relentless campaign to mobilise broader sections of the people on issues relating to people and the economy. The units of AIIEA across the country conducted number of seminars and conventions on issues like unemployment, agricultural distress and

As the AIIEA steps into its Sixty-Ninth Year, manifold challenges confront the organisation. The biggest challenge is to continue to preserve and expand unity on the basis of class understanding and class politics. At a time when the country is witnessing unprecedented polarisation on religious and caste lines, it is important to achieve this task. AIIEA marches on, totally focussed on the ultimate destination of constructing an equal, just and fair society.

the need to protect and promote constitutional values. These tasks were taken to mobilise the people on pressing issues of the nation and make the political class respond and find solutions to improve the quality of life in India. In this year, the AIIEA true to its tradition also reached out with support to those impacted by natural disasters in different parts of the country.

The AIIEA took upon these campaigns with a clear understanding that the economic path chosen after independence favoured the capitalists and landlord classes. However, the Indian ruling classes embracing neoliberal economic policies in 1991 further aggravated the hardships of the common people. Under neo-liberalism, the State gave up all pretensions of acting as a distributor of social and economic justice and unabashedly promoted the interests of both Indian and foreign capital. The neoliberal policies promoted privatisation of state undertakings, undermining of subsidies to the poor, tax concession to the industry and attack on the permanency of jobs. In the last quarter century the economic gap between the rich and poor has astonishingly widened. The government has placed great importance on the growth of GDP and less attention is paid to enhance the quality of life of all citizens. This understanding is based on the assumption that when growth takes place there will be trickle down and a rising tide will lift all the boats. But it is also a fact that general standards of life do not improve automatically with the growth in the GDP unless State intervenes on behalf of the poor and the working class. Promoting the corporate driven economy also requires the State to control the society in order to prevent the outburst of anger against the economic and social injustices. Polarisation and division is the weapon of the ruling class to meet this goal.

The AIIEA like many other progressive organisations had hoped that the political parties would debate these issues during the General Elections of 2019 and present their understanding to help the electorate make an informed decision. Unfortunately, the

bread and butter issues became non-issues and the election campaign was on the basis of polarisation, fear and hate. The corporate houses and the media owned by them were accomplices in diverting the attention from the life and living issues of the people. It is an indisputable fact that the big media worked as a propaganda machine of the government.

The Prime Minister after a resounding win has said that the election results have demolished the myth of secularism and class division. He pointed out that Secularism has become irrelevant and India has only two types of people, those who want poverty to end and those making efforts to end the poverty. This understanding is totally flawed and a misread of the Indian Constitution. This understanding also ignores the reality of the existence of caste oppression and class exploitation. The AIIEA is clear that this is not an innocent assertion of the Prime Minister. The Indian ruling classes want to not just keep alive these caste differences but have a clear strategy to promote them in order to weaken the class struggle. That the Indian ruling classes have succeeded in creating divisions among the exploited sections show the weakness of the movements against caste oppression and class exploitation. The cooption of some caste organisations by the ruling classes is undoubtedly a betrayal of Dr. Ambedkar who tirelessly worked for annihilation of the castes.

The AIIEA is often accused for being political. The AIIEA firmly believes that a trade union necessarily has to be political. A trade union is a class organisation. This class organisation unites people irrespective of religion, caste, language and region. This naturally means secularism is foundational to a trade union and class struggle is its soul. The AIIEA knows that it has members attracted to different shades of party politics. Knowing this it consciously works to unite all these differing opinions into common economic struggles by raising economic consciousness firmly believing that this would ultimately lead to class consciousness. The insurance

The AIIEA is often accused for being political. The AIIEA firmly believes that a trade union necessarily has to be political. A trade union is a class organisation. This class organisation unites people irrespective of religion, caste, language and region. This naturally means secularism is foundational to a trade union and class struggle is its soul. The insurance employees have placed unflinching faith and loyalty in AIIEA because they know that AIIEA has always remained loyal to the interests of the employees while making strenuous efforts to make the employees see the need for class politics.



employees have placed unflinching faith and loyalty in AIIEA because they know that AIIEA has always remained loyal to the interests of the employees while making strenuous efforts to make the employees see the need for class politics. This is different from some other trade unions who adopt different stands with different governments as they display a greater loyalty to the political party rather than to the cause of the working class.

History bears testimony to the fact that AIIEA never compromised on the interests of the insurance employees and waged relentless struggles to improve their living standards irrespective of whichever government in power. The AIIEA had conflicts with Nehru Government. It fought severe battles with Indira Gandhi Government on the issues of wage freeze, lock out and against Emergency. The AIIEA fought a bitter battle with Morarji Desai Government on the issue of termination of 1974 wage settlement and attack on Bonus. It again waged a legendary battle against Indira Gandhi government's decision to destroy the monolithic character of LIC and split it into five or more independent corporations. It took up cudgels against Deve Gowda Government on the issue of Pension Reforms Bill and Narasimha Rao and Vajpayee Governments against opening up of insurance sector. It prevented UPA I and UPA II in passing the Insurance Laws Amendment Bill which was later passed by the Modi Government. It is again to the credit of the AIIEA that it successfully defeated the policy of keeping the basic pay low in the 2012 wage revision by the Modi Government in order to reduce burden on post retiral payments in the form of pension. It must be remembered that the struggle of AIIEA against privatisation remains unparalleled in the annals of the history of working class movement anywhere in the world. In short, the glorious history of AIIEA is the sum total of the advancements made by insurance employees overcoming often what appeared as insurmountable challenges.

These uncompromising struggles and astonishing successes have endeared AIIEA to the insurance employees. This is the reason why successive attempts to split the AIIEA based on political opportunism have failed. The employees stood firmly with the AIIEA and thwarted all attempts to weaken it. It is a fact that the kind of loyalty and allegiance AIIEA commands no other trade union enjoys

in any single industry in India. Despite this, the governments and the administrations in LIC continue to deny recognition to AIIEA in violation of industrial democracy. Undeterred, AIIEA with the support and loyalty of overwhelming majority of the employees in insurance industry continues to make progress and its unstoppable march forward continues in uniting employees across the country and fighting battles against injustices of any kind.

As the AIIEA steps into its Sixty-Ninth Year, manifold challenges confront the organisation. The biggest challenge is to continue to preserve and expand unity on the basis of class understanding and class politics. At a time when the country is witnessing unprecedented polarisation on religious and caste lines, it is important to achieve this task. The job security is bound to come under attack from the neoliberal policies and technological advancement including artificial intelligence. The trade union rights can remain safe only when democratic rights remain safe for the people. Today when the progressive character of Indian Constitution is under attack, it becomes the responsibility of all those who believe in communal harmony, universal brotherhood, Justice, compassion and love to unite and fight the forces that attack the Constitution. It has also become necessary to develop cadres not only to propagate the lofty ideals of AIIEA within the industry but also in the Indian society. AIIEA believes that India is not just a geographical entity; it is a beautiful mosaic of unity in diversity. India is proud of its rich diversities and cultural, religious and linguistic pluralities. Recognition and respecting these diversities and pluralities has kept India united. The present times demand the defence of these diversities as any attempt to homogenise the Indian society would be counter-productive and disastrous for national unity.

These are enormous challenges. But AIIEA has never hesitated to accept the challenges howsoever big they are. History of AIIEA has many instances of successes on issues which many others considered impossible to achieve. As the AIIEA steps into the Sixty-Ninth Year of its Journey, let us re-dedicate ourselves to the lofty and noble ideals of AIIEA and continue our march totally focussed on the ultimate destination of constructing an equal, just and fair society.

Undermining

Rudiments of Economics

Dr Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

On June 6, in its second, Bi-Monthly monetary policy statement of 2019-20, RBI reduced the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) by 25 basis points to 5.75 per cent from 6.0 per cent with immediate effect. Consequently, the reverse repo rate stands adjusted to 5.50 per cent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate to 6.0 per cent. Repo rate slips to the lowest level since July 2010, lowest in 9 years.

Repo rate also known as the benchmark interest rate at which the RBI lends money to the banks for a short term against securities. When the repo rate decreases, borrowing from RBI becomes less expensive. And bank lends at reduced rate. If RBI wants to make it more expensive for the banks to borrow money, it increases the repo rate. Similarly, reverse repo rate is the short term borrowing rate at which RBI borrows money from banks against securities. Any decrease in the reverse repo rate means that the banks will get a lower rate of interest from RBI. As a result, banks prefer to lend to people more instead of keeping their money in RBI. MSF special window for banks to borrow overnight funds from RBI against approved government securities in an emergency situation like an acute cash shortage.

Bank Rate once used to be the policy rate (the key interest rate based on which all other short term interest rates move in India. On the introduction of Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF), discounting/rediscounting of bills of exchange by the Reserve Bank has been discontinued. As a result, the Bank Rate became dormant as an instrument of monetary management. Bank Rate is now

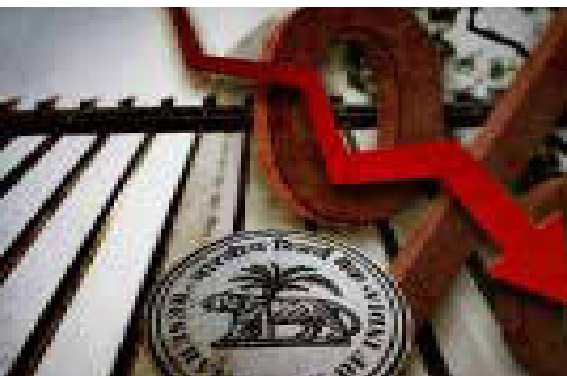


Image courtesy: India Today

Repo rate slips to the lowest level since July 2010, lowest in 9 years. The rate cut comes after official data last month showed that the country's GDP grew 5.8 per cent. Will interest rate cut spur growth? If so, why is growth declining in advanced countries which have ultra low interest rates?

The huge money that corporates have given to election fund of political parties will be replenished by interest cut as their cost of borrowing and interest burden will be reduced. MPC did what corporates and government wanted; undermining the rudiments of economics.

aligned to Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate, the penal rate at which banks can borrow money from the central bank over and above what is available to them through the LAF window. In other words, MSF assumed the role of bank rate, once the latter became operational in 2011. Bank Rate is now used only for calculating penalty on default in the maintenance of cash reserve ratio (CRR) and the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR).

The MPC unanimously votes 6-0 for a rate cut, the second since its inception in October 2016. On the basis of Resolution of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), the MPC also decided to change the stance of monetary policy from neutral to accommodative. This means it sees scope to accommodate growth concerns by supporting efforts to boost demand and reinvigorate private investment. To promote digital transactions, the RBI has decided to abolish charges levied by the central bank for transactions processed in the RTGS and NEFT systems. The RBI will set up a

committee to review the charges for usage of ATMs. Draft guidelines for on tap licensing of small finance banks will be issued soon. To broaden and deepen the financial markets a forex trading platform for retail participants will be set up to make more transactions more transparent.

Of course, the rate cut comes after official data last month showed that the country's GDP grew 5.8 per cent in the quarter ended March 31. India lost its status as a fastest growing major economy to China, which clocked a growth of 6.4 percent in three month period. Growth is expected to decline to 6.8 percent from 7.2 per cent in 2018-19. However, question percolates in mind that will interest rate cut spur growth. If so, why is growth declining in advanced countries which have ultra low interest rate. Actually ultra low interest rate is one of reasons for global financial crisis of 2007-08 and rising debt of those countries. Even, besides this rate cut, RBI had also reduced the repo rate by 25 basis points (0.25 percent) each in its February and April policy reviews. But it did not spur growth. Rather growth has been declined. It is not only private investment public investment should be given importance to enhance growth.

Now, major concern is lack of purchasing power of people which is exacerbated by lack of jobs; and health, education becoming too costlier. India economy is still grappling to get extricated from the quagmire of downturn, slowdown triggered by draconian demonetization and hasty implementation of GST. Only fiscal stimulus, job creation can spur growth not interest cut. However, growth is not only important but distribution of wealth is vital. It is not growth but inflationary expectation is main fulcrum in deciding interest rate. If inflationary expectation is high, interest rate needs to be hiked. If inflationary expectation is low, interest rate may be reduced to spur growth. But now, inflationary expectation is not low as central bank has raised its consumer inflation estimate to 3-3.1 percent from 2.9-3 percent in first six months of current fiscal.

What is paradoxical is that when RBI talks of growth, it has lowered its GDP target for

financial year 2019-20 to 7 percent from 7.2 per cent. April to September 2019-20 GDP growth forecast also cut to 6.4-6.7 percent from 6.8-7.1 percent. It means RBI indirectly admits that reduction of interest rate will have no impact on growth. It means, interest rate has been cut without any reason. It has been done to accommodate corporate's interest not masses. Savers will be severely affected as they will get reduced real interest on their deposits.

The huge money that corporates have given to election fund of political parties will be replenished by interest cut as their cost of borrowing and interest burden will be reduced. Due to reduction in repo rate, while banks reduce the interest of corporates, they don't always transmit the same to consumers. Even do not pass in same proportion of reduction in repo rate. Had Raghuram Rajan been governor of RBI, he would not have reduced interest rate in present situation. The main conflict, spat between past RBI governors and finance ministry was on interest rate cut when it is unwarranted. That led to exit of Urjit Patel and not renewal of term for Raghuram Rajan.

But present MPC led by RBI governor Shaktikanta Das did what corporates and government wanted; undermining the rudiments of economics. ●



Cartoon courtesy: E P Unny, Indian Express

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), decided to change the stance of monetary policy from neutral to accommodative. This means it sees scope to accommodate growth concerns by supporting efforts to boost demand and reinvigorate private investment.

Democracy can die in daylight too

Krishna Prasad



(Courtesy: The Hindu June 14, 2019)

The author is former Editor-in-Chief, Outlook, and former member, Press Council of India.

Modesty is not a virtue of the media in the pixel age, in which preening is a 24x7 pastime. There is neither a demand for it from consumers, nor a supply of it from the practitioners. Equilibrium has been achieved in the marketplace of the mind. Even so, while print, electronic and digital news purveyors use the benefit of hindsight to retro-fit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "stunning" victory into a grand narrative arc, it should not escape the attention of the discerning that an otherwise boastful section of the media is uncharacteristically, modestly, not acknowledging its own not insignificant part in paving the way for India's precipitous lurch to the right.

Elephant in the room

Whilst any number of 'ex post facto' rationalisations may be adduced to explain the Bharatiya Janata Party's logic-defying triumph, it is impossible to ignore the elephant in the room: a large and influential part of the news media which blithely abdicated its role as the eyes and ears of the people — and turned into an undisguised, unthinking and unquestioning mouthpiece of the reigning ideology. That the same boosters are now bloviating about India's future as a secular, liberal democracy and offering gratuitous advice to the Opposition is, at best, a self-fulfilling prophecy. At worst, it is a parody.

Notwithstanding Mr. Modi's advertised disdain for journalists, making the media forget their core tasks — to witness, to verify, to investigate, and to make sense, in the words of the British media scholar George Brock — was always a vital weapon in the manufacture of

consent for the 'Gujarat Model'. Despite early failures as Chief Minister, Mr. Modi deftly achieved this goal. Established media houses were tamed by patronising their competitors. Some pesky editors were reined in or eased out by intimidating owners. Advertisements were turned off and on to let the bottom line send signals to managers.

Result: by 2014, without being explicitly coercive, Mr. Modi was able to manage the headlines, craft respectability and plug himself into the consciousness of the bourgeoisie as the poor, incorruptible, reformist Hindutva icon — the son of the soil who was a victim of the liberal English media.

During the 2017 Assembly election campaign in Gujarat, a BJP TV commercial unwittingly reminded voters of how the Modi machine viewed the media. Two young men are discussing Mr. Modi in a barber shop. One of them calls him a "dictator" and says he has harassed them a lot. They are interrupted by a third person who is awaiting his turn and is listening in on the conversation. "You look like reporters," says the man who identifies himself as 'Vikas'. In other words, journalism — asking, criticising, digging, unearthing — is an obstacle in the grand project.

Inasmuch as this is revealing of a cultivated anti-media mindset — cultivated, because Mr. Modi, the 'pracharak', would often wait outside newspaper offices in Ahmedabad in the 1990s, well past midnight, to have a cup of tea with useful reporters on the political beat — it is the ease with which he, the 'pradhan sevak', was able to negotiate a 'with-me-or-against-me' arrangement across

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the landscape that staggers the mind, and serves as a sobering reminder of the limits of the free press. “Democracy dies in darkness” is the *Washington Post* motto. Here, it would appear, it died in broad daylight.

From North and South America (Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro) to West and East Asia (Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Rodrigo Duterte), the playbook of the 21st century populist-nationalist politician contains the same to-do list: a) turn the public against the media by berating them as an “enemy of the people”; b) delegitimise the media by ascribing motives, calling them news traders, “presstitutes”; c) choke the media by limiting access; distorting the discourse with fake news, alt-right media; d) intimidate the media with draconian laws; by trolling, doxxing, threatening journalists; and e) bypass conventional media using one-way radio addresses, made-for-TV events and social media.

As the results of the 2019 election show, the best student in the class — the “first Prime Minister in 70 years to know where the camera was”, in the words of one political scientist — was able to alternately emasculate and weaponise media, and turn it into a force multiplier at the ballot box. The searing commentary in the foreign media of what is in store shines the mirror on the below-par inquiry by some of our own. And the decision of the Congress, Samajwadi Party and Janata Dal (Secular) to keep their panelists out of partisan TV debates puts the stamp on the perfidy bordering on complicity.

Self-censorship, co-option, and a free ride followed. From Aadhaar to Electronic Voting Machines, and from Doklam to Pulwama with Rafale in between, the biggest scandals lay buried. From LPG to GDP, from missing planes to missing jobs data, the grandest claims lay unexamined. The fake, the frivolous and the frothy — anthem, flag, beef, love jihad, JNU, urban naxals, *azaan* — got more air time than subaltern protests of farmers, weavers and workers.....

Cartoon courtesy:
Satish Acharya, Newsting

‘Wot won it’

When the Conservative Party unexpectedly came to power in Britain in 1992, Rupert Murdoch’s mass-selling tabloid *The Sun* proclaimed on its front page, “It’s The Sun Wot Won It”, to lay claim to its contribution. It is nobody’s case that the BJP won the 2019 election because of the media. India is larger, its democracy more layered, and the media mosaic vastly heterogeneous for such a glib conclusion. But a closer examination of the last five years will reveal the insidious role some in the media played in conditioning minds, building myths, deflecting attention, normalising the abnormal, and poisoning the pool.

Precisely how this was achieved by a provincial leader, a self-declared “outsider” in Lutyens’ Delhi, is difficult to put a finger on. Certainly, home-grown tactics — bogus FIRs, criminal cases, arrests, IT raids, monitoring — were improved upon. Antagonism became the bedrock of the relationship. There was no media interface in the Prime Minister’s Office, just a PRO. The Prime Minister’s plane was off-bounds for hacks. There were no press meets. Journalists’ deaths were not counted. Targeted tweets crowned the new courtiers. In ways subtle and brutal, the message was conveyed and received that hagiography had to replace scrutiny.



In retrospect, the move to allow the Finance Minister to also handle the Information and Broadcasting portfolio after Mr. Modi formed his Cabinet in 2014 will probably go down as a masterstroke in taming the circus, top-down. Dodgy corporates and media houses lived in dread of the taxman. Media licences and clearances were difficult to come by. Using carrot and stick, the circuits of news flow were rewired, the tramlines laid out on who could be attacked and who couldn't be touched. Still to recover from the economic downturn that began in 2007-08, a media aching for 'achhe din' fell in line.

Self-censorship, co-option, and a free ride followed. From Aadhaar to Electronic Voting Machines, and from Doklam to Pulwama with Rafale in between, the biggest scandals lay buried. From LPG to GDP, from missing planes to missing jobs data, the grandest claims lay unexamined. The fake, the frivolous and the frothy — anthem, flag, beef, love jihad, JNU, urban naxals, *azaan* — got more air time than subaltern protests of farmers, weavers and workers. And agenda-setting studio warriors flayed minority ghosts each night — 'Hindus in danger', 'illegal immigrants' — fostering a siege mentality that reeked of victimhood.

In the post-truth world, where social media takes propaganda into the pockets of voters without filter, there is nothing to suggest the election verdict would have been the other way round had mainstream media been less dormant. But when a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court says the media should not forget that its primary responsibility is to be a watchdog, not a guard dog for those in authority, or when a former Chief Election Commissioner warns that "the fourth estate has become the fifth column of democracy", it is useful to wonder if they are seeing the cracks in the pillar with greater clarity.

No end date?

When the media's darkest days — the censorship under Indira Gandhi's 21 months of Emergency — are invoked, L.K. Advani's quote that the press crawled when asked to bend is airily recalled. But at least the media of the time was adhering to a formal order which had a start date and an end date. In the 21st century, it didn't take a presidential order for the 'feral beasts' to suspend their instincts, to look the other way, to stoke majoritarian fires, to fearlessly question not the ruling party but the Opposition, and usher in Modi 2.0. ●

स्वामी विवेकानंद का उक्त कथन विवेक का इस्तेमाल न करनेवाले अंधभक्ति के शिकार लोगों की मनोवृत्ति को परिभाषित करता है जो अपना भला-बुरा सोचे बिना दूसरे की हवा में बह जाते हैं। लोकसभा 2019 के चुनाव परिणामों के बाद मीडिया और उनसे प्रभावित लोग कह रहे हैं कि इस बार मोदी लहर में सब बह गये। चाहे अर्थव्यवस्था चारों खाने चित रही हो या बेकारी और महंगाई से आम आदमी की गहराती रही बढहाली। चोट बिना सोचे विचारे थोपी गई नोटबंदी की रही हो या जी.एस.टी. की, पीड़ितों के घाव हरे हैं। सुरक्षा न सामाजिक है न कानूनी। चैतरफा हाराकारी और सरकारी विफलताओं के बीच मोदी लहर कभी किसी को क्यों दिखाई नहीं दी। कॉर्पोरेट निवेशी जाति-धर्म-राष्ट्रवादी काकटेल में घुली रणनीतिक प्रबन्ध से संजोई इस जीत में जनमुद्दे नेपथ्य में ही रहे।

हमारे देश के गोदी मीडिया के इतर विदेशी समाचार माध्यमों को देखें तो उन्हें मोदी की जीत पर आश्चर्य हो रहा है। 'द गार्डियन' की टिप्पणी गौरतलब है जिसमें उसने लिखा है:- 5 सालों तक अर्थव्यवस्था की बढहाली के बावजूद मोदी ने पिछले चुनाव के मुकाबले ज्यादा सीटें हासिल की हैं यह भारत और दुनिया के लिए बुरी खबर है। भाजपा 'हिन्दू राष्ट्रवाद' की एक राजनीतिक शाखा है जो भारत को गर्त में ले जा रही है। इसी बात को न्यूयार्क टाइम्स ने आगे बढ़ाते हुए कहा - मोदी सरकार के आने से अर्थव्यवस्था मिट्टी में मिल जायेगी, मोदी के कार्यक्रम के दौरान भारत में वंचुवल और रियल दोनों टर्म पर हिंसक घटनाएं हुई हैं। जुडिसरी से लेकर सेना, न्यूज मीडिया, विश्वविद्यालय सभी जगहों पर ब्राह्मणवादी प्रधान विचारधारा ने जड़े जमा ली हैं। मोदी की वर्तमान जीत भारत के लिए एक लंबा डरावना सपना है।

'द गार्डियन' में अभिव्यक्त यह भावना नरेन्द्र मोदी के पिछले कार्यकाल में घनी हुई है। चुनाव परिणामों के बाद अपने विजयी उद्बोधन में जब उन्होंने यह कहा कि भारत में दो ही जातियां हैं। एक गरीब और दूसरी गरीबी दूर करनेवाली तो फिर जातिवादी इस सामाजिक रूग्णता को जाहिर करती मुंबई मेडिकल पी.जी. गायनेकोलॉजी की आदिवासी परिवार की छात्रा डा.पायल तड़वी को उसी जातिवादी प्रताड़ना का शिकार क्योंकर होना पड़ा? उसकी आत्महत्या की हालिया घटना उनके 5 साल के शासन के दौर की परिस्थितियों को बनाये रखने का साफ संकेत है जो 2016 में हैदराबाद केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय के शोध छात्र रोहित बेमुला के साथ घटी घटना की निरन्तरता में है। इतना ही नहीं अपने इसी भाषण में नरेन्द्र मोदी ने धर्मनिरपेक्षता की खिल्ली उड़ाते हुए इसे एक अर्थहीन सनक बताया और कहा कि चुनाव परिणामों ने इसकी हवा निकाल दी है। दरअसल प्रधानमंत्री पद की शपथ लेते हुए हमारे देश के जिस संविधान के अनुसार विधि और न्याय की बात वे करते हैं, कार्यशैली से उसे ही धत्ता बता देते हैं।

कहने को हमारे चुनाव संसदीय रह गये हैं परन्तु जिस तरह से मीडिया व प्रचार माध्यमों में अमेरिका के राष्ट्रपति चुनाव की भांति इसे प्रोजेक्ट किया जाता रहा है, वह संसदीय प्रणाली पर अध्यक्षतात्मक प्रणाली का आरोहण है। मोदी चुनाव भाषणों में प्रत्याशी सांसद का नाम न लेकर अपने नाम पर वोट मांग रहे थे। भाजपा और प्रत्याशी दोनों ही यहां गौण थे। चुनाव जनमुद्दों से परे मोदी विरोध और समर्थन में धुंरवीकृत हो गया था। आये नतीजों में मोदी

PMs statements after registering a record election victory, despite all-round failure in his first term, have sparked a new debate-he has changed now, and he will win the confidence of the Opposition also. Given the past record, people have their own doubts. Meanwhile, the vital issues of people's livelihood and national economy have returned to roost. And the 'changed' PM has set up committees, which, during UPA-I&II rule, he himself derided.

रामचन्द्र शर्मा

लहर के साथ लाशें बहा करती है, तैराक नहीं

विरोध पर मोदी समर्थन भारी पड़ा। विजयोपरांत दिये गये नरेन्द्र मोदी के भाषण को लेकर मीडिया में अब यह बहस चला दी गई है कि मोदी बदल रहे हैं और वे अपने विरोधी का भी विश्वास जीतेंगे। परन्तु गुजरात के दंगों के समय राजधर्म निभाने की उनकी विफलता, हिन्दू-मुसलमान के सवाल पर उनके आक्रामक बयान, प्रधानमंत्री के रूप में गत कार्यकाल के दौरान भ्रष्टाचार को लेकर उठे अनेक सवालों के जवाब न देने की उनकी कार्यशैली, उनके पद की शपथ के मर्म को आचरण में उतारने की विश्वसनीयता पर सवालिया निषान लगाये रखी है। वह उनके विजयापरांत भाषण मात्र से कैसे दूर हो पायेगी?

हम भूले नहीं हैं कि देश के आजादी के इतिहास में सर्वाधिक बेकारी के हालातों को दर्शानेवाले जिन आंकड़ों को केन्द्र की मोदी सरकार लोकसभा चुनाव पूर्व दबाये रखना चाहती थी, चुनाव बाद अब 45 साल में सबसे बड़ी बेकारी के उन आंकड़ों को अब स्वीकार कर लिया है। उस समय विरोध स्वरूप सांख्यिकी विभाग के कई अधिकारी इस्तीफा देकर समयपूर्व चले गये थे। बावजूद इसके चुनावपूर्व सेंटर फॉर मॉनिटरिंग इंडियन इकॉनामी (CMIE) के महेश व्यास ने तो बेरोजगारी के आंकड़े सामने ला ही दिये थे। इनके सामने आने कारण जब बेरोजगारी के आंकड़ों पर बात होने लगी तो सरकार ने लेबर रिपोर्ट जारी करनी बंद कर दी। उन्होंने एन.डी.टी.वी. के प्राइम टाइम में बताया था कि बेरोजगारी की दर नौ प्रतिशत से भी ज्यादा है जो कि बहुत ही चिंतनीय हालात को दर्शाती है।

आप इंटरनेट पर रोजगार और रोजगार के आंकड़ों से संबंधित खबरों को सर्च करेंगे तो आपको पता चलेगा कि लोगों में उम्मीद पैदा करते रहने के लिए खबरें पैदा की जाती रही हैं। बाद में उन खबरों का कोई अता-पता नहीं मिलता है। जैसे फरवरी 2018 में सरकार अपने मंत्रालयों से कहती है कि अपने सेक्टर में पैदा हुए रोजगार की सूची बनाएं। एक साल बाद वो सूची कहाँ है? किसी को नहीं पता। ऐसे ही बजट से पहले सुनिश्चित आय की खबरें भी बहुत तैराई गई हैं। अर्थव्यवस्था चारों खाने चित रही है परन्तु किसे फर्क पड़ता है। आया तो फिर से मोदी ही। अब विकास दर गिरावट के आये ताजे आंकड़े पहले की तरह बदतर विकास दर की कहानी कहते रहें, भला चिंता किसे है। NSSO मान रही है कि 45 साल की सबसे भीषण बेरोजगारी है। जी.डी.पी. में गिरावट जारी है। बेरोजगारी 6.1 प्रतिशत और विकास दर 5.8 प्रतिशत रही, तो रहे उनकी बला से, मीडिया की मेहर और जमलों के फेर में सत्ता तो 5 साल के लिए उनके ही हाथ है। भारत नहीं रहा सबसे

तेज बढ़ती अर्थव्यवस्था, तो ना रहे। बोलने और सुननेवाले दोनों को जब यह पता हो कि झूठ बोला जा रहा है, तो दोष भला किसको दें?

सरकार की कमियों को सामने लाने के बदले गोदी मीडिया की ज्यादातर बहसों में सरकार का गुणगान और विपक्ष का मानमर्दन ही ज्यादा देखने को मिलता है। गत 5 सालों से मीडिया का यह बदला हुआ चरित्र जनता तक सच्चाई पहुंचाने के उलट, सिर्फ लाभ कमाने तक सीमित रह गया है। असलियत को चाहे जितना दबाने के प्रयास क्यों न हो, वह छुपी रह ही नहीं सकती। यही कारण है कि 5 जून को आखिर प्रधानमंत्री को रोजगार और विकास की बदतर होती रही स्थिति को स्वीकार कर रोजगार व जी.डी.पी. में आई गिरावट संबंधी कारणों को जानने और उपाय खोजने के लिए मंत्रीमंडलीय सहयोगियों की दो कमेटियां बनानी पड़ी। लेकिन कमेटियां बना देने और बैठकें कर देने भर से समस्याओं का समाधान नहीं होता। जब तक कि अर्थनीति के जनपक्षविरोधी कारकों से पिंड न छुड़ा लिया जावे। गौरतलब है कि लोकसभा चुनावों के दौरान राहुल गांधी ने यह स्वीकार किया था कि 1991 के बाद जिस अर्थनीति को हम अपनाये हुए थे, वह वर्ष 2012 से नकारात्मक प्रभावकारी हो गई थी परन्तु मोदी सरकार उसी से चिपकी हुई है। जिन मंत्रीमंडलीय समूहों की नरेन्द्र मोदी मजाक उड़ाया करते थे, अब उन्हें खुद बनानी पड़ी हैं। PMO में केन्द्रित रहा उनका पहला कार्यकाल क्या बदल रहा है या दिखावटी है? आठ कमेटियों में अमित षाह को ही उनकी सदात दी गई है।

चुनाव में विजयश्री पाते ही मोदी सरकार का पुराना एजेन्डा गति पकड़ने जा रहा है। नीति आयोग के उपाध्यक्ष राजीवकुमार ने 100 दिन में 46 सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों को निजी क्षेत्र के हवाले करने की घोषणा कर दी है। अब औने-पौने दामों पर अपने चहेते पूंजीयारों को जिनका अब नाम बदलकर 'गरीबी हटाने वाले' रख दिया है, को उपहार में दे दिये जावेंगे। इस बीच देश पर कर्जभार बेतहाशा बढ़ गया है। मोदी काल में जहां कर्ज 49 फीसदी बढ़कर 82 लाख करोड़ रुपये हो गया है वहीं बैंक घोटाले भी मोदी राज में 38 गुना बढ़ते हुए मनमोहन सिंह काल के 1860 से अब 71500 करोड़ रुपये के हो गये हैं। अपराधों की गति तो बेतहाशा बढ़ गई है, जब चुने गये 542 सांसदों में 233 अपराधिक पृष्ठभूमि से सम्बद्ध हैं तो जनता की सुरक्षा, राम भरोसे। कहने को तो सरकार भी रामभक्तों की है। उधर प.बंगाल की जनता भी इन भक्तों और सिरफिरी तृणमूल राज्य सरकार की शह पर जारी हिंसा के बीच पीस रही है।



K.Venugopal Rao

When will we achieve our environmental goals?

The UN environmental Assembly meeting was held in March 2019 in Nairobi (Kenya) and from this Assembly the sixth edition of Global environmental outlook (GEO6) was released on 13th March 2019. The release of reports on environmental outlook was started in 1997 and the fifth edition was released in 2012. The reports are prepared by United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). The reports deal with the present condition of air, water and land and the steps to be taken for protecting their purity. The reports also make an in-depth study of climate change, the measures to be undertaken for protecting the well-being of the Earth and people living on the planet earth. The reports make a critical analysis of the working of international environmental institutes and makes recommendations for the policy initiatives to be taken by the Govts and the civil society.

The sixth edition of the GEO has given a stern warning about the oncoming danger to the humanity. The theme of the GEO6 was "Healthy people and Healthy Planet" and it warns that world is inexcusably drawing resources and producing uncontrollable quantities of waste. The model of economic growth depends on the extraction of ever-higher quantities of materials, leading to chemicals flowing into air, water and land. This causes ill-health and premature mortality and affects the quality of life, particularly for those unable to insulate themselves from these effects. The quality of air and climate change is interlinked. Transport, industry and wastes will have an impact on the quality of air. They are responsible for the climate change also. Air pollution is severely impacting the health of the people in India. 14 of the 15 most polluted cities of the world are in India

and 25 of the 50 most polluted cities are in India. This shows the serious challenge air pollution poses to the public health in India. India is placed at 177th position in 180 countries on the environmental performance index (EPI). India's rank is 178 in air quality and 180 in public health. Govt has no action plan to improve these indices. Govt should fix carbon emission standards and should control the source of these emissions to ensure the quality of air and good health. The Govt has started the National clean air programme but this has not given any optimistic results. The pollution control boards should be given adequate supervisory powers and also powers to ensure the implementation of environmental standards.

The agricultural production has to increase to feed the growing population. Agriculture is in distress. Apart from the other issues, climate change is playing havoc with the lives of the farmers. Monsoons arrive late due to climate change. Average temperatures are increasing year after year and this has a negative impact on food security and public health. Crores of people are living in the most inclement weather conditions. Weak implementations of environmental laws are a threat to the living beings on the planet earth.

The Paris Agreement aims at keeping the global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial level and to pursue efforts to limit temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO6) report warns policymakers that current nationally determined contributions (NDC) under Paris Agreement, 2015 are just a third of the mitigation required to keep global temperatures below two degrees over pre-industrial levels. Scientists at Centre for Sustainable Technologies

The sixth edition of the GEO has given a stern warning about the oncoming danger to the humanity. The theme of the GEO6 was "Healthy people and Healthy Planet" and it warns that world is inexcusably drawing resources and producing uncontrollable quantities of waste. GEO6 also recommends for speedy steps for the protection of environment. But Govts across the world have not taken any concrete steps to implement the Paris Agreement 2015. People's movements should be built to force the Govt to focus on the issues of environment and to implement environmental laws strictly. Then only the slogan of the GEO6 of healthy planet and healthy people would be possible.

at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore say that even if we fulfill all the NDCs, the global temperature will still shoot up to 2.7 to 3 degrees Celsius, and with the United States withdrawing from the agreement, it will likely go beyond 3 degrees.

A special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that an increase of 1.5 degrees over pre-industrial levels would mean heat waves, heavy rainfall, extreme weather conditions, water shortage, reduced farm output, coral bleaching and sea level rise. With a two-degree rise, these risks would increase substantially. At the current pace of rise, the temperature target of 1.5 degrees is likely to be crossed between 2030 and 2052 and the target of 2 degrees is likely to be crossed 10-15 years after that. Emissions need to drop between 40% and 70% globally between 2010 and 2050 and then to net zero by 2070 if we want to arrest the temperature rise.

GEO-6 estimates that the top 10% of wealthy populations are responsible for 45% of GHG emissions, and the bottom 50% is responsible for only 13%. Poor countries and their citizens bear the impacts of environmental hazards. The global environmental degradation has led to irreversible impacts on atmosphere, land, oceans, and biodiversity. These have "very high impact" on the health of people. It is expected the world population will reach to 10 billion by 2050 and 66% of the population will live in urban areas by 2050. Migration of people to cities has to be arrested to reverse the pressure of the human population on the health of the planet. Nearly 600 million people in India depend on perennial rivers for water supply. There are doubts about the perennial nature of the rivers with the receding glaciers. These rivers are also responsible for groundwater recharge and sometimes the groundwater feeds the rivers. This mutual relationship is now in danger.

India needs to urgently address the land degradation and agrarian crisis to prevent mass migration to megacities. India has committed to lower emissions

intensity by 33-35% compared to 2005 levels by 2030. India also gave a commitment to increase total cumulative electricity generation from fossil free energy sources to 40% by 2030. India promised to create additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tons through additional forest and tree cover. Indian people use ground water extensively and therefore India should make water part of a circular economy in which water is treated as a resource that is recovered, treated and reused. But unfortunately water protection gets low priority and many state governments do not show any urgency in enhancing rainwater harvesting. No concern is shown to build new storage areas which act as a supply source when monsoons fail and also help in managing floods when there is excess rainfall.

GEO6 also recommends for speedy steps for the protection of environment. But Govts across the world have not taken any concrete steps to implement the Paris Agreement 2015. Air pollution has to be controlled. For this there should be proper coordination among the various ministries of the Govt. Infrastructure facilities should increase. Environmental laws should be implemented strictly. Emission norms should be determined and these should be implemented without any relaxation. Fossil energy and poisonous chemicals should be banned. The National clean air programme should be implemented strictly in all the selected 102 cities. In the recent times an attempt is seriously made to amend the environmental laws to suit the interests of the corporate houses. If this is not stopped it will be disastrous for the survival of the humanity. The Central and state govts should implement the decisions taken in the international forums sincerely. Science forums and civil society should enlighten the people about the issues of environment and climate change. People's movements should be built to force the Govt to focus on the issues of environment and to implement environmental laws strictly. Then only the slogan of the GEO6 of healthy planet and healthy people would be possible.



Monthly earnings are below minimum norms, most are working well beyond 8 hours per day and nearly three fourths can be fired anytime because they don't have any written job contract. 'Regular' wage or salary earning employees were no better than others except that they were earning regularly.

GOVERNMENT REPORT REVEALS SHOCKING WORKING CONDITIONS

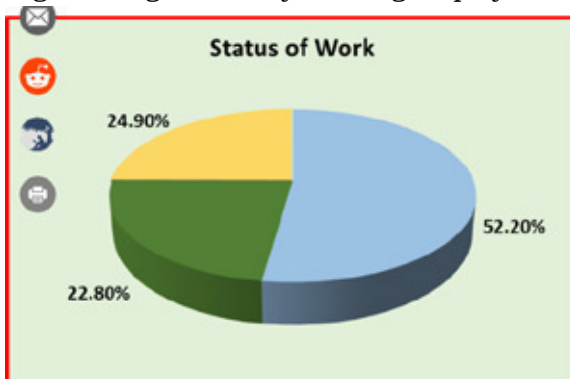
Subodh Varma

[This is part 1 of a series on working conditions in India, drawing from official sources.

Courtesy: Newsclick 12/6/2019)

A recently released government report paints a harrowing picture of the condition of workers in India with most earning less than half of the minimum accepted norms, 71% not having any written job contract, 54% not getting paid leave and over 57% in rural areas and nearly 80% in urban areas working much beyond the eight-hour work day (48-hour-week).

The report also reveals that over 52% of workers are actually 'self-employed', which means they may be doing farming or running petty shops or enterprises largely with their own labour, or service providers of various kinds. About a quarter of working people are casual workers, getting work and earnings on a daily basis, while nearly a quarter (23%) are regular wage or salary-earning employees.



The report, called the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), is based on a survey of about one lakh households (4.33 lakh persons) carried out by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), which has since been renamed as the National Statistical Office (NSO), under the Ministry of Statistics. It was done between July 2017 and June 2018.

Earnings

According to the Seventh Pay Commission, set up by the central government to fix salaries of central employees, the minimum wage or salary needed for a four-member household was about Rs. 18,000 in 2016. This was arrived at after taking into account the minimum calorific value of food requirement and all other essentials like clothing, fuel, housing, and also education of children etc. It included the Supreme Court guidelines of 1992 regarding such fixation.

In rural areas, both self-employed and casual workers earn less than half of this minimum standard while the regular employees earn about two thirds of it. This is indicative of the large share of small and marginal farmers in the country and the intense crisis they are facing.

In urban areas, both self-employed and regular employees will include the whole of the elite class with earnings that are several



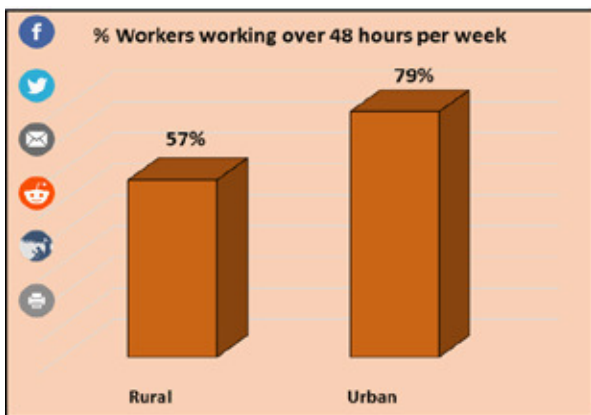
orders of magnitude larger than the average. Despite inclusion of this section, the earning level is still below the minimum standard betraying the fact that there must be a large number of urban employees or self-employed that are earning much less. Casual labourers in urban areas earn about half of the minimum standard.

Working Hours

Earnings discussed above are not necessarily for an eight-hour working day. This is revealed by another part of the PLFS report giving details of the number of hours worked by different types of workers. This is summarised in the chart below:

In rural areas 57% of workers are working for more than the stipulated eight hours per working day (or 48-hour working week). In urban areas, a shocking 79% workers are working beyond the 48-hour working week.

It is through these means that the earning



levels mentioned earlier are achieved by the workers – they are working for longer hours just in order to make ends meet. Experience shows that it is common for workers not to get any extra overtime payment, or in some cases get the same rate overtime instead of double rate as stipulated in law.

No rights, No Job Security

Another dimension of workers' life is revealed by the survey report where it found that 71% of the workers did not have any written contract or appointment letter. This means that they can be removed from service at any time, with no remedy available. They have no proof they ever worked in the enterprise. This was for the so-called regular wage/salary earners.

Over 54% of the workers did not get paid leave. In case they were forced to take leave because of illness or a marriage in the family, their wage was lost. Nearly half of the regular employees did not get any social security benefits, like provident fund (PF), health insurance, pension, maternity benefits etc.

Clearly, these 'regular' wage or salary earning employees were no better than others except that they were earning regularly. Most of these would be contract employees, whose numbers have exploded over the past years, as employers prefer to give the least possible benefits so that their profit margins are healthy.

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Surgical Strike on Employment

The record of the first Modi government

Vikas Rawal & Prachi Bansal

(Courtesy: Macrosan.org, June 4, 2019)

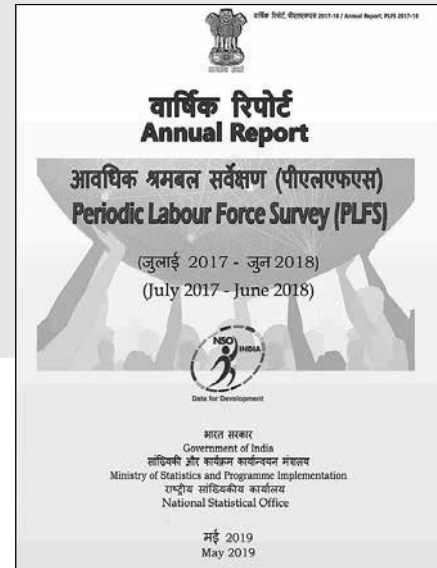
The central government has finally allowed the release of the report of the 2017-18 Periodic Labour Force Survey. The previous government had blocked its release before elections because the survey showed a massive increase in the unemployment rate, worst in the last 45 years. Some data from the report that were leaked in the media showed that there had been a massive contraction in rural employment. In these Lok Sabha elections, BJP tried every trick, and with remarkable success, to distract the voters away from issues such as unemployment and livelihoods. The report perhaps saw light of the day formally possibly because, having won the elections with a massive mandate, the primary purpose of blocking the release of this report ceased to be relevant.

The report released on May 31st, after a delay of over four months, confirms what became available through media leaks and provides some additional details. The report also provides a considerable amount of data that has so far not been available. In this article, we summarise some new details that have become available with the release of this report.

The most important measure of overall conditions of employment is the Worker- Population Ratio (WPR), or what has traditionally been known as the Work Participation Rates. WPR is the proportion of population that is actually employed. It excludes persons who are unable to find employment, persons who have given up looking for employment because they realised no work was available for them, and persons who are not looking for employment because they are engaged in other activities (such as studies or housework). Of these, the last category is expected to be small, particularly

among the rural poor, if one restricts the analysis to the working- age population (15 to 59 years). A fall in WPR for this age group is a clear indication of contraction in the availability of employment. It must be noted that a vast majority of workers in India are informally employed and do not have regular full-time employment. They include persons who were self-employed – working in their own farms, shopkeepers or street vendors – as well as persons who had casual wage- employment. WPR refers to all persons who are employed for at least 30 days in a year. Since workers who are employed for as little as 30 days are considered as employed, WPR does not capture the level of under-employment among workers. It is reasonable to expect that contraction of employment would result in a fall in WPR in the working age population as well as a decline in the duration of employment of workers. This latter aspect is not captured in the analysis of WPRs presented in this article.

A lot of media attention on the results of the PLFS surveys has focussed on unemployment rate, which, at 6.1 per cent, is at an all-time high level. It is, however, important to note that the unemployment rate, the way it is defined, is somewhat misleading. Unemployment rate refers to proportion of unemployed persons in the labour force. The labour force is defined to include workers and persons who were actively looking for work. Importantly, this definition treats persons who have given up looking for employment (for example because they realised no work was available for them and searching for work was costly) as being uninterested in working. In other words, a large



In these Lok Sabha elections, BJP tried every trick, and with remarkable success, to distract the voters away from issues such as unemployment and livelihoods. The report perhaps saw light of the day formally possibly because, having won the elections with a massive mandate, the primary purpose of blocking the release of this report ceased to be relevant.

proportion of unemployed are not counted in the unemployment rate by definition. The fact remains that the problem of unemployment affects many more people and not just 6.1 per cent as reflected in the unemployment rate.

Given this limitation, it is better to focus on work participation rates for the working-age population, and use the proportion of non-workers in this working age population as a measure of unemployment in the economy. These numbers, for India as a whole and at the State-level, are presented in Tables 1* and 2*. Table 1 shows the proportion of working age (15-59 years) men and women in rural areas who were employed. Table 2 shows the same data for urban men and women. These tables show that, in 2017-18, 25 per cent of rural working-age men and 75 per cent of rural working-age women were not employed. In urban areas, 26 per cent of working-age men and 80 per cent of working-age women were not employed.

How have employment conditions changed between 2011-12, when the last survey of employment was conducted by NSSO, and 2017-18, the year of latest PLFS survey. At the all India level, the proportion of employed persons in the rural working age population fell by about 6.8 percentage points for men and a whopping 11.7 percentage points for women. In urban areas also the worker population ratios fell – by 4.2 percentage points for working age men and 1.2 percentage points for working age women. What is striking about these numbers is that the decline in worker to population ratios took place across rural and urban areas, for men and women, and in almost all of the large States. In fact, for rural men and women, there was not even one State among the 22 most populous ones that did not

see a contraction of employment.

The extent of unemployment among rural women is particularly striking. In India as a whole, only about a quarter of working-age women found any employment. The State-level figures are even more pathetic. In Bihar, only four per cent rural women found any employment. In Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, less than 15 per cent rural women had any employment. Of the 22 large States, in only three States – Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh – more than 50 per cent rural women found some employment. In 2011-12, the figure was more than 50 per cent in seven out of these 22 States.

Now let us turn our eyes to different sectors. Table 3 shows the proportion of population (all ages) that are employed in different sectors. Because of lack of data separately for different age groups, we have made this table for the entire population. The table shows that the contraction of employment was led by agriculture. Proportion of men employed in agriculture fell by 4 percentage points while proportion of women employed in agriculture fell by 6 percentage points. In 2017-18, only 28 per cent of rural men and 13 per cent of rural women were usually employed in agriculture. These numbers are a damning reflection of the agrarian crisis that plagues rural India today.

The other sector which saw a big change was construction. Between 2004-05 and 2011-12, construction had emerged as the main sector in which employment expanded. Over this period, proportion of population that was employed in construction increased by 3.4 percentage points for rural men and 1.1 percentage points for rural women. Over this period, construction emerged as the sector that absorbed workers who did not find any other employment. Employment in construction sector involved arduous labour, was insecure and often required workers to migrate. Nevertheless, construction became the employer of last resort for workers who did not have any other employment and could not afford to remain unemployed. After 2011-12, the growth of employment in construction also tapered off and this employer of last resort also shut its door to workers. Between 2011-12 and 2017-18, the proportion of rural men employed in construction increased only by 0.4 percentage points and proportion of rural women employed in construction fell by 0.7 percentage points.

* We have not reproduced the four tables in the article. Our readers may refer <https://www.networkideas.org> for details.

Finally, let us look at different types of employment. Table 4 shows the proportion of population (all ages) that was self-employed (having enterprises where no workers are hired or enterprises in which other workers are hired, worked as unpaid helpers in household enterprises), had regular salaried employment or worked as casual worker. The table shows that the proportion of population that worked as casual workers fell for everyone, men and women, rural and urban. The overall decline was of 3 percentage points. There was a marginal, of one percentage point, increase in proportion of persons who had regular salaried employment. Clearly, the increase in regular salaried employment was inadequate to cover the fall in casual employment.

Contrary to claims of the Modi Government, there was a distinct decline in self-employment across all categories except rural men for whom there was only a marginal rise. On the whole, proportion of population that was self-employed fell from 20.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 18.1 per cent in 2017-18.

The entire focus of the employment policy of the First Modi Government was on self-employment as it was argued that people should become job creators rather than job seekers. A special Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship was created and a host of schemes such as Start Up India, Make in India and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana were started. The misplaced premise of these policies was that unemployment was a result of lack of skills and capital, and imparting skills and cheap credit would enable people to start enterprises. The reality, however, was that the problem of demand created by an intense agrarian crisis and deflationary policies such as demonetisation made enterprises — agriculture as well as non-farm enterprises nonviable. The disproportionate burden of this fell on small enterprises, which are the main source of self-employment and the proportion of population working in own-account enterprises fell. The only marginal increase in self-employment seen in case of rural men was entirely on account of rural male workers moving back into agriculture as they lost employment in non-agricultural activities (Table 3). This marginal increase in self-employment of men in agriculture was a result of contraction of employment availability in non-agricultural activities rather than enabling of workers to start their own enterprises.

It has been argued by the government that these estimates from the Periodic Labour Force Survey are not comparable with the earlier Surveys of Employment and Unemployment because of a change in sampling strategy. Amitabh Kant, CEO of Niti Aayog and member of the National Statistical Commission, has argued that the sample of the PFLS survey is only 0.03 per cent of Indian households and therefore not reliable. A similar argument was made by Surjit Bhalla, former member of the PM's Economic Advisory Council, and Avik Sarkar, head of the Data Analytics Cell in the NITI Aayog.

This is a bogus argument. Even an elementary textbook of statistics tells us that the reliability of estimates from a survey depend on the absolute size of the sample and not on the sampling ratio. We find it difficult to believe that those at the top of the national statistical and policy establishment today seem to have forgotten these elementary lessons. The PLFS survey, as the earlier Surveys of Employment and Unemployment, are based on a large, scientifically-designed, stratified random sample. Such a sample represents its sampling frame, nothing less, nothing more. There is no change in the way sampling frame is drawn between the two rounds of surveys. The sampling strategy has changed. But estimates from both the surveys use unbiased estimators that account for multipliers based on their respective sampling strategy. A change in sampling strategy may, if at all, limit the extent and kind of disaggregation that one is able to do. It has no bearing, either in terms of having an inherent bias or a problem of precision, for all-India and State-level estimates.

The PLFS survey has established beyond any reasonable doubt that the period of First Modi Government was a period of a very serious contraction in availability of employment. The problem of unemployment was most serious in rural areas, affected the entire country and most of the major sectors of the economy. The government has refused to accept it so far. Its ruling party also managed to deflect attention from issues such as employment during elections by successfully using its propaganda machinery. But there is no doubt that the disastrous performance of the First Modi Government on the employment front would continue to haunt the Second Modi government.

Unilateral Decision to reduce ESI Contribution Arbitrary move in the interest of the corporate lobby-CITU

The Centre of Indian Trade Union has denounced decision of the Govt of India to reduce rates of contribution to Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESI), as the unilateral and arbitrary and in gross violation of the decision of the tripartite Governing Body of ESI.

In the 175th tripartite Governing Body meeting of ESI held on 18-09-2018, it was unanimously decided to reduce the employers' contribution to ESI from 4.75% of the wages of the enrolled workers to 4% and the workers contribution from 1.75% to 1% making the total ESI contributions at 5% annually. Accordingly draft Gezette Notification was issued asking for opinion, if any, within 45 days. Simultaneously in the 177th Governing Body meeting held on 19 February 2019 in the presence of and under the Chairmanship of Union Labour Minister, ESI Budget for the coming financial year (1919-20) was finalized on the basis of this the contribution generation of 5%.

Now suddenly, after the new Govt assumed charge with the same Labour Minister, the Govt declared further deduction in ESI contribution to 3.25% (a deduction of 1.5% for the employers) while reducing the workers contribution to 0.75% further reducing the total contribution-generation to 4% in gross violation of the unanimous decision of the tripartite governing body. In totality, the employers' obligation towards ESI has been

drastically reduced by 1.5% while reducing the workers contribution by only 1%. This would lead to huge benefits/savings of the employers to the tune of estimated Rs 8000 to Rs 10000 crore.

And ill motive of the Govt to benefit the employers' lobby gets further clear by the fact that in the meeting of the tripartite Standing Committee of ESI Governing Body held on 13th June 2019, nothing was reported about the Govt decision on reduction of ESI contribution to be announced on same day evening at 7-35 pm, and its arbitrary departure from the unanimous decision of the Governing Body of which Labour Minister was a party.

The increase in enrolment in ESI as claimed by the Govt is due to upward revision of entitlement level from Rs 15000/ to Rs 21000- from 1-1-2017 as decided by the Tripartite Governing Body. Reduction in ESI contribution mainly to benefit the employers/business class played no role in it. Rather this is going to create serious difficulty to meet its obligations of social security and medical benefit to the enhanced number of beneficiaries.

CITU has stated that it vehemently condemns such arbitrary move of the NDA-II Govt in the interest of the corporate lobby and demands implementation of the Governing Body decision on ESI contribution dated on 18-09-2018 in letter and spirit.

NZIEA Delhi-II helps Adoption Centre



The Women Sub-Committee of NZIEA, Delhi Divisional Committee II helped an Adoption Centre in Faridabad Sector. This Adoption Centre takes care of large number of orphan young children and toddlers. The Volunteers of the Sub-Committee visited the Adoption Centre on 21st June 2019 and distributed the materials which was in need like Milk powder boxes, sanitary pads, oil, soaps, talcum powder and many other necessities of daily life. This gesture came for wide appreciation.

10th Conference of LICEU Thrissur Division

Felicitation to Com M Rajeev on his retirement



The 10th Annual General Conference of LIC Employees' Union Thrissur Division was held on 25th and 26th May 2019 at Regional Theatre, Thrissur. The open session was converted to felicitate Com M Rajeev on his retirement after 37 years from the services of the Corporation on 28th February, 2019. The open session was inaugurated by Com Amanullah Khan President, AIIEA. He appreciated the role played by Com Rajeev in building the organisation from 1997 to 2010 when he was General Secretary of undivided Ernakulam Division. When Ernakulam Division was bifurcated he was shifted to new Thrissur Division and became General Secretary from 2010 to 2014 and President from 2014 to 2018. Com Rajeev was very particular in getting the benefits to the employees by sincerely following it up with higher tier of the organisation. He also greeted his wife and son for extending their support to him to discharge his organisational duties amidst his family affairs.

The Conference was held in the jubilation over the victory of AIIEA in achieving the final

option for pension. Also it was held just after the election results to the 17th Lok Sabha were announced. Com Amanullah Khan in his emotional speech narrated the dangers ahead of us such as amendment in Labour laws, disinvestment of public sector institutions and speedy economic reforms etc.

Com R Rajeev President LIC Employees' Union Thrissur Division presided the session. Com. M Girija, Jt Secetary, AIIEA, Com T Senthil Kumar, General Secretary, SZIEF, Com.M K Balakrishnan, District Jt Secretary CITU, Com C Raveendranathan former Vice President AIIEA, leaders from the fraternal Trade Unions including Smt.K Shylaja, General Secretary, Class I Officers Association and Com. T Joseph, General Secretary, LICPA Thrissur Division greeted the Conference. Leaders and cadres of all Divisions in South Zone, members of LIC Pensioners' Association, LIC Class I Officers Association, NFIFWI and Agents organisations participated in the meeting.

Replying to the felicitations, Com. Rajeev said that whatever knowledge and perception he garnered in his life was the result of the activities that he was bound to carry forward on behalf of the union, and for the same he is thankful to the mighty organisation AIIEA.

The open session concluded with vote of thanks proposed by Com.K R Vini, Vice President, LIC Employees' Union Thrissur Division.

In the delegate session 15 comrades participated in the discussion on the report. Com Senthil Kumar General Secretary SZIEF intervened during the debate. Com Deepak



Viswanath replying to the debate requested to strengthen the organisation at all levels. The report and Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31.12.2018 was unanimously adopted by the house. 12 Resolutions on various issues were passed.

The task of conducting the 34th General Conference of SZIEF from 24th to 26th August 2019 is entrusted to LIC Employees' Union,

Thrissur Division for which the preparatory work is progressing smoothly.

The house unanimously elected Com R Rajeev, Com Deepak Viswanath and Com K Vinod as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the ensuing term. The meeting came to an end with Com.K Rajesh Jt Secretary proposing Vote of thanks.

34th General Conference of SZIEF – Formation of Reception Committee

The Reception Committee was formed on 12th June for the successful conduct 34th General Conference of SZIEF to be held at Thrissur from 24th to 26th August 2019.

Com.U.P.Joseph, Secretary CITU Thrissur District inaugurated the Reception Committee formation meeting. In his speech, he expressed his apprehension about the policies that the new dispensation at Centre is going to formulate in the matter of issues that affect working class. Dilution of Labour laws as desired by the corporates and scale-down of shares owned by the Government in Public Sector Undertakings are the two important initiatives for which signals have already been given by the respective ministries. Bank-Insurance is another area where the new Government is looking up for FDI hike, he said in his speech. We, therefore, have to be vigilant to protect our hard earned rights, he cautioned us.

Com M Kunhikrishnan, President of SZIEF who explained to the audience different aspects of the Conference, opined that the set back that working class in India received in the recent Lok Sabha election was of temporary nature. We would come back with renewed vigour. He also alerted us the possible policy measures the new Government is likely to take given that speech that the former Finance Minister salivated at the windfall gains were the shares of the LIC to be disinvested. "Insurance service is a welfare programme. As such the imposition of GST on it is unjustifiable", he remarked.

Com V Sreekumar, State President Confederation of Central Government



Employees, Com P K Davis, District President, Karshaka Sangham, Com K V Haridas, District Jt Secretary CITU, Com T Narendran, State President BEFI and Com M Girija, Jt Secretary AIIEA delivered greetings

A Reception Committee was formed with Com K Radhakrishnan, Former Speaker, Kerala Legislative Assembly and President, All India Dalit Soshan Mukti Manch as Chairman, Com Deepak Viswanath, General Secretary LIC Employees' Union Thrissur Division as General Convenor and Com K Vinod Treasurer LIC Employees' Union Thrissur Division as Treasurer. Various other committees were formed for the smooth conduct of the Zonal Conference. All the Divisional leaders and Zonal Leaders of South Zone attended the meeting.

The meeting was presided over by Com R Rajeev, President, LIC Employees' Union, Thrissur Division. Com Deepak Viswanath General Secretary, LIC Employees' Union welcomed the gathering and Com.K.Rajesh Jt Secretary, LIC Employees' Union, proposed Vote of Thanks.

Diamond Jubilee Conference of ICEU Coimbatore



The 60th Annual (Diamond Jubilee) Conference and 33rd General Council Meeting of Insurance Corporation Employees Union, Coimbatore Division was held at Coimbatore on 24th, 25th and 26st of May 2019. Com. M Gajendran, President ICEU hoisted the Union Flag and presided over the meeting. The Delegates session commenced on 24.05.2019 at 5 PM. The General Secretary placed the annual report of the executive committee. Com. V Janakiraman, Assistant Treasurer, SZIEF, initiated the debate. Com M Girija, Joint Secretary, AIIEA, Com K Swaminathan Vice President, SZIEF and Com V.Suresh, Joint Secretary, SZIEF addressed the delegates. Senior Comrade A R Kalyanasundaram greeted the delegates. Com P Vasudevan, Secretary, LIC Pensioners Association, Coimbatore Division greeted the delegate session on behalf of the pensioners. 20 comrades including 8 women participated in the debate and enriched the report. After the summing up by the General Secretary, the report was accepted unanimously. Com. Amanullah Khan, President, AIIEA addressed the delegates. He called upon the delegates not to be despondent with the election results and continue the fight by building unity among our members. The audited statement of accounts presented by the treasurer was also accepted unanimously. 30 resolutions including withdrawal of GST on Insurance Premium were passed in the conference. Com. M Gajendran, Com K Thulasitharan and Com. K. Manikandan were

elected as President, General Secretary & Treasurer respectively for the ensuing term. The delegate session concluded with Com K Thulasitharan rendering the vote of thanks.

The Open session was held on 26.05.2019, in which Com Amanullakhan, President, AIIEA gave the special address. He explained in detail the present political situation in India. He said that India has lost its soul in the Parliamentary Elections in which BJP was voted back to power with increased strength. He said that it is only a bend, but not the end of the road. He also added that AIIEA is disappointed but has not lost hope and emphasised the need to build unity among the workers. He called upon the units to be in preparedness to fight the anti workers policy of the Government.

Com K Swaminathan, Vice President, SZIEF while speaking in the conference explained in detail the tactics adopted by AIIEA to clinch the Final option for Pension. Com M Girija, Joint Secretary, AIIEA in her special address emphasised the need for United struggle to win over our demands including wage revision.

Com P.R.Natarajan, the newly elected Member of Parliament from Coimbatore Parliamentary Constituency representing CPI(M) was felicitated in the conference. Com. Natarajan explained the importance to protect our democracy and freedom of speech. He assured that he will work with AIIEA to protect the Public Sector LIC and General Insurance Companies.

Comrades who retired from LIC after the last conference were felicitated. Likewise three comrades who studied in Dr Ambedkar education and employment centre and got jobs in various organisations were also felicitated. The open session of the conference came to an end with Com.K.Thulasitharan, General Secretary, ICEU rendering the vote of thanks. More than 475 comrades including 200 women participated in the open session of the conference.



INTER-ACTIVE SESSION OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES AT VIZAG



ICEU Visakhapatnam division organised an exclusive women interactive session at Visakhapatnam on the topic 'AIIEA Conference and role of Women Employees', on 21.05.2019 as part of the preparations for the successful conduct of 25th Silver Jubilee Conference of AIIEA to be held from 27th to 30th January 2020.

Com M Girija, Joint Secretary, AIIEA, was present in the session. Addressing the gathering she stressed in detail regarding the difference in working conditions of women in public and private sectors. The safety women have under the strong fold of AIIEA is lacking in other sectors. She said that women need to actively involve themselves in the prestigious

AIIEA conference. It is privilege for comrades of Visakhapatnam Division, to see all the leaders of AIIEA and actively take part in various committees which will be given to us for the success of the conference. Major decisions will be taken in this prestigious 25th conference and the City of Destiny, Visakhapatnam under SCZIEF. The conference is being conducted after the great victory of achieving a final

option for pension.

Earlier in the day, notebooks and pens were distributed to 25 school children by comrade Girija, at the 'Wall of Giving'. The wall of giving was started on 6.3.2019 and is continuing incessantly till date, with sponsors from various quarters.

Com N Ramanachalam, general secretary gave the details of the preparation for the conference. Com M Kameshwari, AP state working women convenor also addressed the gathering. Com T Sunanda, Divisional women convenor presided over the meeting. Com Srilatha welcomes the gathering. A large number of women comrades attended the meeting and were enthused.

LIC Women win AIPS Carrom Championship

The All India Public Sector Carrom Championship organised by ONGC was held at Mumbai from 3rd to 7th June 2019. The Women Team of LIC was represented by P.Nirmala, S.Apporva (Hyderabad), S.Lalitha (Chennai) Medha Matkari (Pune) and Shilpa Palnitkar (Thane). The team performed brilliantly to win the Women's Team Championship beating RBI in the finals.

S.Apoorva emerged as Women's Singles Champion defeating Rashmi Kumar of ONGC in the finals. The LIC team of S.Apoorva and Medha Matkari secured the second place in the Doubles events. They lost narrowly to the team from ONGC.

Insurance Worker congratulates these sports persons for bringing laurels to LIC and wishes them continued successes in the future events.





TRADE UNION CLASS FOR WOMEN IN CHENNAI II

The Chennai Division-2, Women Sub-Committee Organised a Residential Trade Union class for women Comrades at JOE BEACH RESORT near Mahabalipuram on 7th & 8th, June 2019. This is the silver jubilee year for the women sub committee of ICEU Chennai division II. This trade union camp was arranged as part of observance of Silver jubilee.

Prof CHANDRA ATHREYA was the resource person for the first session. She spoke on the subject "Women in History and struggle for emancipation". There was a lively interaction after her submission.

In the Second session on 8.6.2019 Sri R.GOVINDARAJA, Marketing Manager, Chennai Division-2 spoke on 'Our organization and around us'. He focused on the challenges confronting our organisation and how to win over the challenges. Our comrades shared their views regarding the organisation.



This session was very informative and well appreciated.

Thereafter Com E.MUTHUKUMAR, (MNC Union) informed the audience about the various problems being faced by employees working in the multinational companies. He gave details of the struggles they have been carrying out to secure the basic rights for the workers and sought the support of AIIEA to their cause.

Comrade H.VASANTHI, (Unorganised Sector) narrated the living conditions of the Unorganised Sector Female Workers. Everyone felt the pain after knowing the grueling and oppressive working conditions of the Unorganised Sector Female Workers.

Comrade K.SWAMINATHAN, Vice-President, SZIEF Summed up the 2 days session and appreciated the WSC for successful conduct of the Residential TU class. He also set the future tasks for the women sub-committee.

36 WOMEN COMRADES and 16 MEN COMRADES attended the Residential TU Class and enthusiastically participated. TU Class succeeded in creating a better class understanding in the participants.

Comrade R.SARVAMANGALA, SZIEF, Jt. Secretary, briefly spoke about the need of a Residential Trade Union Class. Comrade S.S.GEETHA, Jt. Convenor welcomed the Participants. Comrade K.TULASI, Convenor and Comrade V.ANUJA, Jt. Convenor presided the first and second session respectively. Comrade D.LEELAVATHY, Jt. Convenor proposed the vote of thanks.

“Constitution of India – An Overview

An educative program at Bangalore to celebrate Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Jayanthi



Insurance Corporation Employees' Union, Bangalore Divisions I & II jointly organised an educative program to celebrate Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Jayanthi on 22nd June 2019. Justice H.N.Nagamohan Das, Retired Judge of Karnataka High Court spoke on the subject “Constitution of India – An Overview”. Justice Nagamohan Das has written a book on the salient features and basic structure of the Constitution. He has been touring around the State of Karnataka and outside with the support of Samudaya, a cultural troupe to spread awareness about the importance of the Constitution in the life of our people and the nation and the necessity to protect and defend it against the virulent attacks launched in the recent period.

Justice Nagamohan Das paid rich tributes to Dr.Ambedkar. He said it is unfair to treat him just as a leader of the dalits. The work and contributions of Dr.Ambedkar to empower the women and the rights of the working class cannot be underestimated. Being the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution, he gave the Indian citizens a very progressive constitution which not only gave certain fundamental rights but also outlined the Directive principles of the State policy. Justice Nagamohan Das said that to understand Indian Constitution one must know the history of India, its rich diversities and pluralities. The Constitution is the reflection of the hopes and aspirations of the people of the newly liberated country. He pointed out that the progress achieved and the enhancement of the quality of life in the last seventy two years is due to the constitutional scheme of things. He said today there are attempts to undermine the Constitution and they need to be fought and defeated. He also suggested that time has come when we must demand certain basic rights such as rights to food, health, education as fundamental rights. He also stressed that a demand must be made



to make the rights under Directive Principles of State Policy legally enforceable.

There was a lively interactive session after his submission. Wide range of questions were raised which were brilliantly answered by Justice Nagamohan Das.

Com Amanulla Khan, President, AIIEA briefly addressed the gathering. He thanked Justice Nagamohan Das for enlightening the cadres of AIIEA on the importance of Constitution and the role it plays in shaping their lives. He said Constitution is a social contract of the Indian people on means and ways of constructing a just and equal society. The Constitution defines the relationship between the State and the Citizen as also the relationship between the citizens. The attempt to undermine the Constitution is to disrupt this relationship. Criticising the manner in which religious slogans were raised in the Parliament by the Members of Parliament while taking oath to uphold the values of Constitution, he said Parliament which is the temple of democracy resembled more like a religious akhara. This clearly demonstrated how little Constitution and its values are understood by our elected representatives. Com Amanulla Khan said the Indian Constitution recognised

the diversities and pluralities and that has held the nation together. He warned that attempts to homogenise the Indian society is problematic and will undermine the unity of the people. Agreeing with Justice Nagamohan Das, he said that a campaign needs to be built up to demand making rights under Directive Principles legally enforceable and the units of AIIEA will be a part of this campaign.

Earlier, Com K.S.Vimala representing Samudaya explained the background in which Samudaya and Justice Nagamohan Das have undertaken to spread the message of Constitution, its importance and the need to defend and work for the expansion of democratic rights.

Com M.R.Sameera, Jt.Secretary, IEU, Bangalore I welcomed the gathering and Com TPN Murthy, Jt.Secretary, ICEU, Bangalore II proposed the vote of thanks. The program was presided over by Coms D.Suresh and P.Nagendra, Presidents of ICEU Bangalore I & II respectively.

A large number of employees participated in the program. They were extremely happy and enthused with the subject and the presentation of Justice Nagamohan Das.

Seminar on Constitution and Democracy at Dharwad

People for India Forum, Dharwad organised a seminar on 18th April 2019 at Karnataka Vidya Vardhaka Sangh, Dharwad on the subject "CONSTITUTION – SAVE DEMOCRACY"

Com. B.N.Poojary, Convenor of People for India Forum, Dharwad extended hearty welcome to Dr. Sanjeev Kulkarni, President of the Seminar, Prof. Ganesh N Devy, Shri Prakash Udikeri, the main speakers and all the participants.

The house observed 2 minutes silence to pay homage to Dr. Siddalinga Swamiji of Shri Tontadarya Math, Gadag and Prof. K.Raghavendra Rao who were associated with the PFI right from inception.

Dr. Sanjeev Kulkarni presided over the seminar and conducted the proceedings.

Prof.Ganesh Devy in his address said Constitution is a gift to India after a long social and political struggles; Constitution is non-negotiable, while certain articles can be changed fundamental rights cannot be changed; Constitution gave us a mechanism

to change our society towards equality & scientific temperament. Laying great emphasis on freedom of speech and expression, he said that it has become important to defend Constitution and all democratic institutions. He said the challenge today is to protect the democracy which is humane, full of love & compassion and the task in India is to clean the society from hatred as Nelson Mandela did in Africa.

Shri Prakash Udikeri addressing the gathering said today freedoms given under the Constitution are under severe attack. Protection of constitution is the responsibility of both the government as also the citizens. Both the speakers replied to the queries of the participants.

The program was participated by a large number of people from different walks of life. It came to a successful conclusion with Shri Shyamsundar Bidarkundi proposing the vote of thanks.

Dr. Ambedkar Jayanti at Mysore: Talk on 'Indian Constitution'

As part of observance of 128th birth anniversary of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, ICEU Mysore Division organised a talk on "Indian Constitution" on June 22, 2019.

Initiating the talk, Com .S.S. Nagesh , Gen. scy, ICEU Mysore Division underlined the need to understand our Constitution , which is a political , economic and social programme in a proper manner. He also spoke of the prejudice around the Constitution that it only speaks of the affirmative action of reservation. He also briefly narrated the process through which the final draft of the Constitution was submitted on November 26, 1949.

Dr. Shivabasavaiah , Director, Dr . B.R.Ambedkar Post Graduate Centre, Mysore University , ChamaraJanagar was one of the main speakers . Paying rich tributes to Dr.Ambedkar who played a major role in the drafting Constitution, he lamented that the invaluable contribution of Dr.Ambedkar to the Indian society is not considered with dignity and honour across the spectrum of society and that Dr.Ambedkar is branded as a person who worked only for the oppressed section . He explained at length various Articles of the Constitution, the concept of Welfare State, various rights of citizens, fundamental duties, gender equality, rights of working class to form trade unions and hold peaceful protests, equal pay for equal work for both men and women, removal of untouchability. He underlined that maintaining the unity, integrity of the Nation, respecting other religions, plural culture, traditions inculcating constitutional

values. Expressing anguish over statements by some sections of the ruling class that Constitution should be amended, he expressed the confidence that this will not be allowed to happen. Recalling his association with LIC as member of PHC for two terms, he lauded our Union for observing Dr.Ambedkar jayanti in a purposeful manner.

Another main speaker was Com.N.Vijayakumar, President, ICEU, Mysore Division. He spoke on the subject from a working class perspective. He spoke of the three main thoughts of pre-independence movement and how the framers of our Constitution arrived at the conclusion that our Constitution should be based on secularism, equality, fraternity and justice. He also informed that the framers of Constitution had studied the Constitutions of different countries and gave Indian citizens a very progressive constitution. Speaking of confluence of every sect that invaded and settled in India on the culture of India, he pointed out that India can never be one religion, one language and one culture country. He also spoke of the vision of public sector, including the insurance sector and need for State control over land as enshrined in the Constitution. Expressing his concern over growing instances of curbing the voice of dissent, freedom of speech and expression, he emphasised on the need to defend the constitution.

Com. J.Suresh, Jt.Scy, SCZIEF who presided over the programme spoke of the relevance of Constitution, especially in the present day context and expressed the confidence that any attempt to weaken our Constitution shall be met with struggle and campaign.

The programme was well attended by employees, fraternal organisations and general public. While Com.S.Sridhara, Treasurer, ICEU, Mysore Division welcomed the gathering, Com. Channappa, Jt.Scy., ICEU, Mysore Division proposed the vote of thanks. Com.G.Vidyavati, Convenor, Women sub-committee introduced the main speaker, Dr.Shivabasavaiah to the audience.



Insurance News in brief

■ A.M.KHAN, DHARWAD

- ❑ Technology advances, including mobile applications and blockchain, are making it easier for organizations to offer insurance to third parties including customers and suppliers, opines global insurance broker, Marsh. Marsh goes on to note that the number of captive insurance companies writing third-party business is growing at a double-digit pace. New technologies can help captives not only insure new risks but also reduce expenses by streamlining the handling of policy information, proof of insurance, and claim payments. Common third party coverages include extended warranties, auto liability, theft, travel accident and independent contractor/customer risk vendor policies.
- ❑ ANZ (Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd.) life insurance disappears from the Australian market as Zurich Insurance Group takes it over.
- ❑ To reduce its expenses by 300 million pounds (\$380 million), Aviva Plc. Plans to cut costs and jobs. By 2022 it has decided to reduce its staff strength by 1800.
- ❑ Bharti AXA Life Insurance, a private life insurer, has been conferred with the FICCI Claims Excellence Award as recognition for its customer-friendly claims services in the life insurance sector.
- ❑ A survey by PwC India, Insurance Technology Adoption Survey 2019, finds that though insurance companies are betting big on digital channels of distribution, a majority of the customers still prefer agents because they continue to consider any insurance product as a complex product and hence these customers still rely on face-to-face interactions for better understanding of the product.
- ❑ To shore up their solvency margin, the Department of Financial Services, Government of India, has sought a capital allocation of Rs.4000 crore for infusion into the United India Insurance Co., National Insurance Co., and Oriental Insurance Co. Except Oriental Insurance Co., the rest two are struggling to meet the solvency margin. While Oriental Insurance's solvency ratio stood at 1.57, United India had a solvency ratio of 1.52 as of March 2019 and that of National Insurance was 1.01 as at 31st December 2018.

The insurance regulator IRDA has hiked the third party insurance premium of cars, two wheelers, and transport vehicles. The increase in rates for cars range between 12 per cent to 12.5 per cent up to 1500 cc and for cars with more than 1500

cc there is no increase. Similarly for bikes with engine capacity of 350 cc and above there is no increase, for less than 350 cc the increase range between 12.88 to 21 per cent!. The increase is steep and a heavy burden on the common man, while it is nothing for the owners of the

luxury and high capacity vehicles. The insurers are unhappy for they feel the hike will just meet the cost. The increase has come into effect from 6th June 2019.

- ❑ The world Insurance Report 2019, reveals that there is a significant coverage gap in meeting risk areas as far as insurance in India is concerned. The Report identifies that cyber security and environmental threats as some of the emerging risks. It says that globally the insurers have been slow to respond to emerging risks.
- ❑ Of the many parameters to gauge a life insurance company's performance is persistency, especially 61st month persistency. This means policies that are retained after five years. This is one of the most important metrics that drives a firm's profitability. So far, Indian private life insurers have struggled to boost their persistency levels. Even the top four private life insurers' 61st month persistency hovering around the 50 -55 per cent mark.
- ❑ The IRDAI has issued Final Exposure Draft with regard to reforms in health insurance based on the recommendations of the Working Group. As per the final exposure draft the IRDA proposes to some of the key exclusions to protect the interest of health insurance policy holders. If approved, in future, no health insurance policy should incorporate exclusions such as diseases contracted after buying the health cover, injury or illness associated with hazardous activities, and impairment of a person's intellectual faculties from drugs and stimulants or depressants prescribed by a medical practitioner.
- ❑ Market share of LIC as at 31st May 2019 improves over that of April 2019 reaching 66.08 per cent from 52.78 percent registering a total of Rs.18764.63 crore first year premium. HDFC follows LIC with a market share of 9.24 percent which is followed by SBI Life with 6.49 per cent. In terms of number of policies LIC's market share is 71.71 per cent with 2085333 policies.
- ❑ The four public sector general insurance companies together have made a market share of 42.14 as at 31-05-2019. New India Assurance tops at 16.80 per cent while National Insurance is last at 7.86 per cent. United India has a market share of 9.30 per cent and Oriental stands at 8.18 per cent.



COMBODIAN GARMENT WORKERS STRIKE OVER CONDITIONS

Thousands of Garment workers stopped work and held rallies outside the Sunrise Light Enterprises factory in Bavet City in Cambodia on 12th June. The workers had signed a petition demanding the right to elect their own representatives, overtime payments for holidays and weekend shifts, a 10% reduction in production, health insurance and to end arbitrary sackings.

SYDNEY FERRY CREW RESUMES STRIKE ACTION

Sydney Harbour Ferry Deckhands employed by the NRMA Fast Ferry Services workers continued Industrial action on 14th June with six hour stoppage of work. The action is on a dispute over New Enterprises agreement. The workers had 2 hour stoppage protest in March & April this year. The Management failed to address wage demands or offer a single permanent job to the casual work force.

THOUSANDS OF DISABILITY CARE WORKERS HELD ONE DAY STRIKE

Over 3000 workers at IDEA Services, NEW ZEALAND, which provides support for people with disabilities held nationwide 12 hour strike on 16th June. The strike is an escalation of Industrial action that has already involved four one hour strikes since April 2019. The workers are demanding better working conditions, better levels of staffing and improve safety and reduce workload & also concerned about job security.

MASS DEMONSTRATION IN DEFENCE OF EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

Mass Demonstration took place on 30th May in Brazilian cities in defense of Education. The marches organised by National Students Union, National post graduate organization and the Brazilian Union of Secondary school students are a continuation of protests on May 15th and included thousands of students, Professors and teachers. Over a million marched throughout Brazil.

The Demonstrations were held in opposition to Budget cuts, Education Policy aimed at censoring political views and slashing funding for Public Education and Science. A general strike also was held on 14th June throughout Brazil.

STRIKE BY HONDURAN DOCTORS & TEACHERS

Demonstration took place outside the US Embassy in TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS on May 31st as part of protests by striking Doctors & Teachers against privatisation of Education and Medical care. The strike began on May 30th. Most schools in HONDURM capital have shut down along with several hospitals. The strikers have vowed to continue their protests until Government cancels its proposals.

NATIONWIDE PROTESTS BY FRENCH EMERGENCY MEDICAL STAFF

On 12th June, Emergency Room medical workers protested against staff and resource shortages at ER facilities in Hospital across France. The protest

Working Class Struggles

S.SRIDHARA, MYSORE ■

was part of a series of symbolic strike which began in Paris in March. Since then protests have taken at 95 facilities across France, involving doctors, paramedics, nurse and other staff. Under French law ER staffs are prohibited from taking full strike action. ER workers say 10000 new staff are needed to make up for staff shortages. They are also demanding a 300 EURO a month pay rise.

WARNING STRIKE BY GERMAN PENCIL WORKERS

Workers employed by five pencil manufacturing companies in Germany including Faber-Castell and Schwan-Stabilo held a warning strike on June 5, 2019. The union members are seeking a 5% pay hike over the next year with a minimum 150 EURO a month for lower paid workers. The companies have offered 1.8% for 12 months

PROTESTS BY UKRAINIAN LVIVVUGILLIA MINERS OVER WAGE ARREARS

On 10th June miners employed at the UKRAINIAN State-owned mine held a protest by blocking roads in the LVIV Region near the Polish/UKRAINIAN Border. They were protesting for arrears of wages. They continued their protest outside the Offices of the Company.

SOUTH AFRICAN VAAL UNIVERSITY WORKERS STRIKE:

Workers at the South African VAAL University of Technology went on strike on June 5th for 10% wage increase. They are also demanding permanent employment for contract workers. The University management refused to negotiate with the Union despite a Government arbitration Services directives.

WILDCAT STRIKE BY SALINAS, CALIFORNIA FOOD PROCESSING WORKERS

Hundreds of food processing workers at the Express plant in Salinas, California, carried out a wildcat strike on June 11th to demand improved wages and working conditions.

HAITIAN PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS STRIKE FOR WAGE INCREASES, OVER -DUE PAY, WORKING CONDITIONS

On June 4th, Employees of Haitian Directorate General of taxes began a week long strike. Tax Collection workers demanded 300% increase in their salaries to offset the rise of cost of living.

LECTURERS AT PORTSMOUTH UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND PROTEST JOB CUTS

Lecturers at the University of Portsmouth in Southwest England held a protest on 3rd June over job cuts.

ZIMBABWE RURAL TEACHERS STRIKE FOR A LIVING WAGE

Rural teachers began an all out strike on 3rd June to demand a living wage. The Government is intimidating teachers for taking action

Economic Tid Bits

■ J.SURESH, MYSORE

- ◆ The unemployment rate in Bremen, one of the 16 Federal States in Germany is at 10%. In Bremerhaven, an exclave of Bremen, unemployment is nearly 13%. Of the State's 6,80,000 inhabitants, around 1,00,000 receive Hartz IV social benefits. Bremerhaven is also the German region with the highest poverty rate, with 28.4% at risk of poverty in 2018 according to official statistics. In the city of Bremen, the rate was 28.9%. In European countries, 113 million people, namely 22.5% of the population lives below the official poverty threshold. 12.5 million young people are in occupational mobility, neither working nor studying. 10.2% of the school students drop out of school. Education, Healthcare, Sports, Culture, everything is measured according to profit.
- ◆ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has fined Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd., 2 Crore of rupees for not furnishing details about the shareholdings of its majority stakeholders and its plans for complying with stake dilution norms. The RBI said it decided to impose a penalty after reviewing the bank's reply to a notice seeking an explanation about why it had not complied with regulatory norms. "RBI came to the conclusion that the bank had failed to comply with the directions issued by RBI and decided to impose monetary penalty on the bank", the Reserve Bank of India said in a statement. The Bank is in the middle of a legal battle with the Central Bank, which last year ordered Uday Kotak, the billionaire head of Kotak Mahindra Bank, to lower his holdings in the private sector bank. Kotak, is the India's fifth largest bank by market capitalisation. It may be recalled that the same Kotak group had demanded disinvestment of LIC, a few years ago.
- ◆ India's economic growth slowed to a 20-quarter low of 5.8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2018-19, well below expectations. Growth for the full year came at 6.8%, the slowest pace in the last five years, according to the data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). While leading indicators had pointed towards sluggish economic activity, the slowdown is deeper and more entrenched than was believed, with both consumption and investment weakening. Coupled with recent data, these numbers would suggest that economic activity is likely to

be subdued in the first half of the current fiscal as well. Latest data shows that gross value added (GVA) grew at a mere 5.7 per cent in Q4 during FY 19, driven by contraction in agriculture, and slower growth of manufacturing,

construction and trade, hotels, transport and communication.

- ◆ Agriculture contracted by 0.1% in Q4 FY 19, down from 2.8% in the previous quarter. Part of the decline could be attributed to the base effect. The sector had grown by a 6.5 % in the fourth quarter of 2017-18. Much of the sector's performance depends on how the monsoon fares this year. The IMD has predicted an average monsoon, with rainfall to be 96 per cent of the long-term average, though greater clarity, especially over its distribution, will emerge in coming weeks. Manufacturing sector was another area of weakness, as the Corporate results has shown. The sector grew by a mere 3.1% in Q4, down from 6.4% in Q3. Though on the flip side, public administration, defence and other services and financial, real estate and professional services, grew at a robust pace. The former, which largely connotes government spending, grew by a healthy 10.7% in Q4 up from 7.5% in Q3, presumably on account of higher spending by state governments. On the expenditure side of the data, private final consumption expenditure, which is largely household demand, slowed down to 7.2% in Q4 from 8.1 % in Q3. Figures in the last few months indicate that there has been fall in automobile sales and all goods and indicators of consumer demand have come down. The banks too do not appear to be in good health with NPAs said to be around 8 trillion.
- ◆ NITI Ayog has announced 'big bang' reforms through anti-labour changes in labour laws and fast tracking privatisation or closure of 46 PSUs. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman of NITI Ayog has categorically told that "They (foreign investors) will have reasons to be happy" and the government will "build an inventory of government land that can be offered to foreign investors". This needs to be read along with the statement by US Corporates asking the newly elected government to have 'bold reforms' including change in land and labour laws and e-commerce. The government is planning a new labour legislation that would merge 44 labour laws under four categories- wages, social security, industrial safety & welfare, and industrial relations.

Rs.8K Cr. for State Governments:

LIC has invested more than Rs.8,366 crore in Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Sikkim state government bonds.

Growth: Life insurance industry's new business premium grew a healthy 41.15% to Rs 28,395.89 crore in May, with LIC maintaining its market share at 66.08%. LIC's share in the number of new business policies sold was 71.71% as on May 31, 2019.

Special Scheme: Extending its support to cyclone-ravaged Odisha, the LIC Housing Finance Ltd (LIC HFL) has announced a special scheme offering housing loans at a concessional interest rate of 8.50% with zero processing fees. The special scheme will be applicable to cyclone-affected residential property located in operational areas of the company in the State.

Agents bring 55%: A recent report by PwC India Pvt. Ltd, a consultancy firm, done along with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) found that even today about 55% Indians buy insurance products from agents or brokers.

Aadhaar KYC: IRDAI plans to ask the government to allow insurance companies to carry out Aadhaar-based electronic-KYC, IRDAI chairman Subhash Chandra Khuntia said. All private companies, including insurers, are currently barred by the Supreme Court from using people's Aadhaar numbers to complete the e-KYC process. However, as per a note issued by the revenue department on May 9, the government could soon allow non-banking private entities – such as insurance firms and mobile wallets – to use Aadhaar-based eKYC.

Health Insurance changes: IRDAI has issued a draft on standardizing and rationalizing exclusions in health insurance policies. The draft seeks to redefine terms such as pre-existing ailment to remove ambiguity, seeks to include new lines of treatment due to medical advancement, besides making other customer-friendly recommendations such as giving insurers an eight-year moratorium after which a policy is not contestable except for proven fraud and permanent exclusions.

All hospitals: Delhi high court has ruled that insurance companies would have to honour claims by valid medical policy holders who have received treatment at any government-registered hospital. Cashless facilities must also be extended to all such hospitals. Currently, health insurance companies and third party administrators (TPAs) insist that a hospital had to be registered with them for patients to avail insurance claims.

Cylinder explosion insurance: Insurance of home structure must cover accidental death due to gas

For our Field Force

■ ARIVUKKADAL, THANJAVUR

cylinder explosion for a reasonable amount, the IRDAI has said in a working group report on fire insurance for dwellings, offices and shops. Almost 4,000 lives are lost every year in India due to gas cylinder or stove blasts.

Insurance must for Visa: Directorate General of Passports of Saudi Arabia, Jawazat, has reaffirmed that a valid health insurance is a mandatory criterion for renewal of visiting visa.

Seeking higher insurance: A survey conducted by PolicyBazaar.com took into account the buying behaviour of 10,000+ millennials between the age-group of 22-35 years across 15 states in India. It reveals that 6 out of 10 are millennials, opting for health plans with higher sum insured in upwards of Rs 5 lakh up to 1 crore has been increased.

New Age Insurances: *Yale Company of Japan is insuring children for such an insurance in which children's bullying will be insured. The Company claims that it is the first company in the world to provide such insurance. According to research done by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, 4.1 million cases related to children's bullying were reported in primary, secondary and higher schools in 2017. *Bajaj Finserv has launched a specialised insurance cover for passengers travelling in local trains in country's financial capital Mumbai. The travellers will get an insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh against a payment of Rs 399 per annum. *Bengaluru based digital lending startup ZestMoney has partnered with Digit Insurance to offer insurance against EMLs to its 5 million customer base. The partnership will enable Zest customers to be relieved of the debt in case they are not able to repay because of unforeseen circumstances. The loan installments will be covered in case of events like hospitalisation, death or permanent disability.

Industry movements: *Hero FinCorp, the retail lending arm of Hero MotoCorp Ltd, is in advance talks to buy Reliance General Insurance (RGI) from Reliance Capital. *Paytm is in talks to obtain Coverfox. Coverfox is a Mumbai-based insurance marketplace, which sold premiums worth \$100 million through its platform and generated \$22 million in revenue with a million transactions done last year. *Manipal Education & Medical Group (MEMG) will increase its stake to 51% in health insurance joint venture with American insurance giant Cigna Corporation. The name of the joint venture will be changed to ManipalCigna Health Insurance from Cigna TTK.

LIC PERFORMS WELL IN TABLE TENNIS

A five member Table Tennis team comprising of Sougata Sarkar, Rohit Chakraborty, R Rajesh, Ravi Joshi and J Singh participated in All India Public Sector Table Tennis Championship held at Chandigarh from 28th March to 1st April 2019 and the team won Bronze medal.

Sougata Sarkar of Hindusthan Bldg Annexe Base of KDLIEA created history by winning gold in single's category of the tournament. This is the first ever Gold medal in such tournament by LIC in any category. Sougata Sarkar was declared Man Of The Tournament. LIC's doubles team comprising of Sougata



Sarkar and Rohit Chakraborty both from Hindusthan Bldg Annexe Base of KDLIEA won Silver Medal in the same tournament.

Insurance Worker congratulates these sportspersons for bringing laurels to LIC and wish them best in the future endeavours.

Com K.Satyanarayana Rao

Com K.Satyanarayana Rao, President, Insurance Pensioners' Association, Raichur Division passed away on 19th April 2019. Com K.S.Rao, joined LIC in 1963 as Assistant and became a militant cadre of the AIIEA. He was punished with transfers for his union activities. Undeterred he converted the punishment into a challenge and made immense contribution to build strong units of AIIEA wherever he worked. He also made enormous contribution to the cause of the pensioners as President of IPA, Raichur Division. Insurance Worker condoles the sad demise of Com KS Rao and shares the grief with the bereaved family.

Response



The editorial of June 2019 is very clear in presenting the happenings during election. The analysis is sincere. As it says "the role of media and money power" is a major factor in deciding the results. The last paragraph is the message given to the newly elected government. As a responsible trade union our duty has become challenging to build the working class unity.

The write up "lesson from fani" attracted my attention, as I have seen the irresponsible act of TN govt during gaja cyclone recently. Every state govt should learn from odisha govt about the precautionary measures taken.

B.Ranjani, Madurai.

DONATIONS

Com. T.J.Venkatesh Murthy,
D. O. Mysore Rs.5000
Com. Sugumaran R,
Thanjavoor Div. 1000
Com. Amith Karmarkar,
KSDiv., Kolkata 2001
Com.M.S.Kubsad, Haveri
Br.Dharwad Div. 2000
Com.Rajat Kanti Sarkar,
Silchar DO 3000
Insurance Worker heartily
thanks these comrades for
their love and affection.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

| Month | Base 2001 | Base 1960 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| July 2018 | 301 | 6870.60 |
| August | 301 | 6870.60 |
| September | 301 | 6870.60 |
| October | 302 | 6893.42 |
| November | 302 | 6893.42 |
| December | 301 | 6870.60 |
| January 2019 | 307 | 7007.55 |
| February | 307 | 7007.55 |
| March | 309 | 7053.20 |
| April | 312 | 7121.68 |
| Base 1960=Base 2001x22.8259 | | |

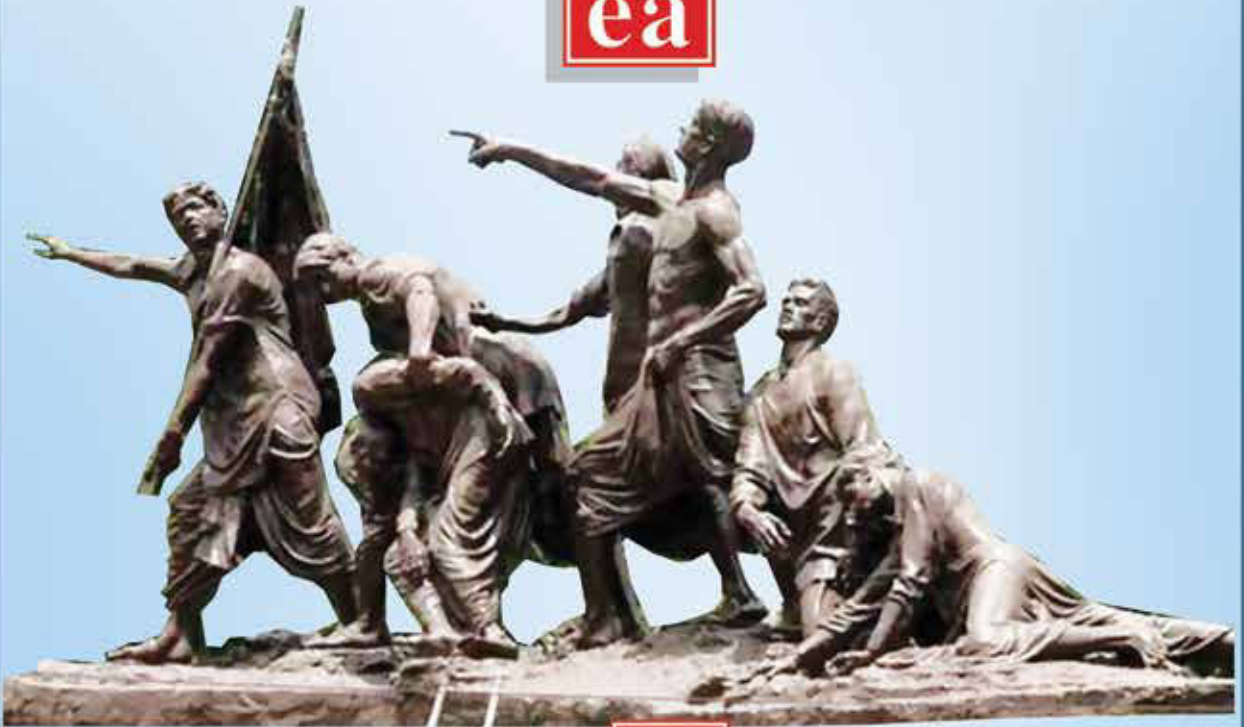
REVOLUTIONARY GREETINGS
to
AIIEA
on its
69TH FOUNDATION DAY



**AIIEA IS NOT JUST A TRADE UNION,
IT IS A WAY OF LIFE FOR
INSURANCE EMPLOYEES**

Insurance Employees' Association,
Jamshedpur Division
&
Life Insurance Employees' Association
Bhubaneswar Division

GREETINGS TO
ALL INSURANCE EMPLOYEES
ON
THE 69TH FOUNDATION DAY OF AIEA



East Central Zone 
Insurance Employees Association
PATNA