

# Insurance Worker



Monthly Journal of ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

Volume 67 • Number 4 • April 2024 • ₹ 10 • Pages 40+4



## International Women's Day

TURNING INDIA INTO A GRAVEYARD OF DEMOCRACY

### CAMOUFLAGING POVERTY



वर्तमान भारतीय राजनीति में नैतिकता

### UNEMPLOYMENT 'A LOST DECADE'



## Wage revision reaching finality

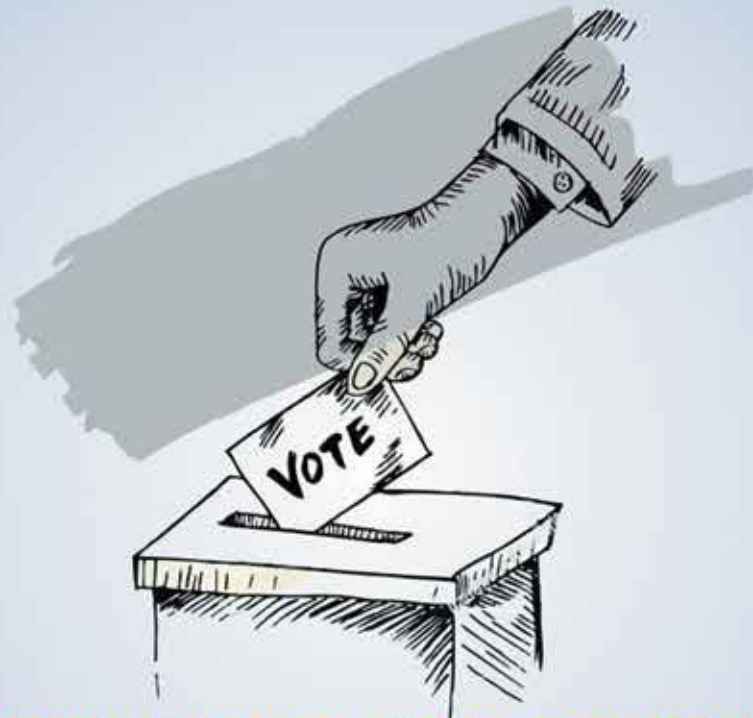
Unilateralism cannot go unchallenged



## General Election 2024

- No luxury of silence
- Force political discourse on
- Unemployment, Inequality
- Poverty and Price rise





**"ELECTION IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT  
FESTIVAL OF DEMOCRACY"**

**LET US PARTICIPATE IN THE FESTIVAL  
AND BRING THE CHANGE WE WISH FOR.**



**GENERAL INSURANCE  
EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION  
SOUTH ZONE**



## THERE IS NO LUXURY OF SILENCE WORKING CLASS HAS A TASK CUT OUT

The Election Commission has announced the schedule for Parliament and some State Assembly elections. The elections will be held in 7 phases spread over an unprecedented long period of 46 days. It is often said that elections are the celebrations of democracy. But that can happen only if they are free and fair. In today's India, it is rather difficult to say if they can be free and fair. The long time taken to complete the process of elections raises a lot of questions. Why with every successive election, the number of phases and duration is continuing to increase? The election commission answer to this criticism is that the logistic of moving the security personnel involves time. But this argument is not totally convincing. It is an undeniable fact that such long period of campaigning gives advantage to the party with the biggest financial muscle. Hence the criticism of the opposition that the schedule is drawn to benefit the ruling party has some truth in it.

Democracy today has become hostage to power politics and money power. The State

has never been neutral and always had a bias towards the big capital. But what has happened in the last one decade is really terrifying. The interests of the State are clearly identified as those of the capital. This has resulted in huge increase in crony capitalism in the country. The influence of big business on the framing of policies of governance and managing the economy today are clearly visible. The control of big business over the press and media and a concerted campaign to delegitimise opposition and influence the course of elections is a serious issue. This hijacking of the State by capital has undermined democracy.

The role of big money in elections is a well-known fact. In the case of Electoral Bond Scheme, the government had the audacity to argue before the Supreme Court that it is not necessary for the electorate to know who is funding the political parties. Fortunately, the Supreme Court struck down the scheme holding it unconstitutional and made it clear that people have the right to know who is funding whom and whether the transaction involved

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Cover design & Lay-out:  
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any quid-pro-quo. The details emerging out of the disclosure of the Electoral Bonds clearly point out that the ruling BJP is the biggest beneficiary. The talk of Prime Minister that he is running a clean administration sounds hollow today. From whatever details that are in public domain now, it is clear that Electoral Bonds have purchased favours benefitting the industrialists. Electoral Bonds have also been purchased to neutralise and influence the IT and ED raids and investigations. This journal will have a detailed discussions on this subject when fuller details are available. But nevertheless, it is an indisputable fact that Electoral Bond Scheme clearly points to the power of dirty money in elections.

What are the issues that the people should be concerned about in this election. The elections provide an opportunity to raise questions on unemployment, poverty, income and wealth inequality, rural distress, polarisation of society on communal lines, the subversion of federalism and more importantly the undermining of democracy and the constitution. The government must be made answerable to the promise of creating two crore jobs every year. Rather than creating jobs, what we see today is alarming rise in unemployment especially among the educated youth. It is strange as to why the growing economy is not creating jobs? The simple answer is that Indian economy is service centred. The services sector contributes nearly 60% of the GDP. This sector is witnessing loss of jobs due to technological upgradation and the Indian IT sector has lost its sheen. The government has failed to deliver on its promise of increasing the contribution of manufacturing to the GDP. With the MSME sector in crisis, the job situation has become grave. The agitation by the farmers shows the acute rural distress and it is now accepted that agriculture growth is seeing a sharp downtrend. The claims of poverty reduction are a hoax. The country in the past one decade has seen sharp concentration of wealth widening both income and wealth inequalities. It should have been unacceptable for any democracy to see the surge in luxury car sales and massive addition of wealth of the billionaires when tens of millions of jobs were being lost and people were facing acute distress during covid. These are the issues on which the government must be made answerable and accountable.

We have also seen unprecedented polarisation of the Indian society. The politics of hate has enabled a situation where a prejudiced majority has succeeded in political marginalisation of the hated minority. What was sometime back the fringe has now been mainstreamed. The prejudice of the law enforcing authority and the political blessings encourage these fringe elements to run amok. This is not only making the minorities feel insecure but is also bringing disrepute to the nation internationally. The measures on citizenship laws and refusing political space and representation to minorities has made Indian democracy wanting. Democracy is not just elections but also inclusivity and representation to every community in decision making and policy framing activities. India today has totally failed in this respect.

Another trend that we see today is the weaponisation of the investigative agencies to weaken the opposition. The elected representatives are purchased to topple

चुनाव आयोग ने संसद और कुछ राज्य विधानसभा चुनावों के कार्यक्रम की घोषणा कर दी है। चुनाव दिनों की अभूतपूर्व लंबी अवधि में चरणों में होंगे। अक्सर कहा जाता है कि चुनाव लोकतंत्र का उत्सव है। लेकिन ऐसा तभी हो सकता है जब वे स्वतंत्र और निष्पक्ष हों। आज के भारत में, यह कहना कठिन है कि क्या वे स्वतंत्र और निष्पक्ष हो सकते हैं। इन चुनावों की प्रक्रिया पूरी होने में लगने वाला लंबा समय कई सवाल खड़े करता है। प्रत्येक होने वाले नए चुनाव के साथ ये चरणों की संख्या और अवधि क्यों बढ़ती जा रही है ? इस आलोचना पर चुनाव आयोग का उत्तर यह है कि सुरक्षा कर्मियों को स्थानांतरित करने की व्यवस्था में समय लगता है। लेकिन यह तर्क पूरी तरह से यकीनी नहीं है। यह एक निर्विवाद तथ्य है कि प्रचार की इतनी लंबी अवधि सबसे बड़ी वित्तीय ताकत वाली पार्टी को बढ़त देती है। इसलिए विपक्ष की यह आलोचना कि कार्यक्रम सत्तारूढ़ दल को लाभ पहुंचाने के लिए तैयार किया गया है, कुछ न कुछ सच्चाई रखता है।

लोकतंत्र आज सत्ता की राजनीति और धनबल का बंधक बन गया है। राज्य तो कभी भी तटस्थ नहीं रहा और उसका हमेशा बड़ी पूंजी के पक्ष में झुकाव रहा है। लेकिन पिछले एक दशक में जो हुआ है वो वाकई

elected governments in total disregard to the choice of the people. Those against whom investigations are launched on charges of corruption are happily inducted into the BJP and rewarded with positions of power. With unprecedented concentration of political power, all independent institutions that act as checks and balances stand compromised. The distinction between the ruling party and the State is totally erased. Criticism of the government and the Prime Minister has become seditious. Every effort is made to undermine the constitution and there are open calls by leaders of BJP to give them such majority which would enable change in the constitution.

These are the real-life issues that should occupy the political discourse during these elections. But we have the experience that these issues would be deliberately sidelined with the help of a pliant media and divisive issues will be brought to polarise the society on communal lines for electoral advantage.

The situation, therefore, demands vigilance on the part of citizens not to allow distraction of attention from the issues of life and living.

It has been the experience world over that trade union movement is the force that can combat right-wing authoritarianism and fascism. It has the strength to raise inconvenient questions and speak truth to power. The trade union movement cannot have the luxury of silence today when the threat to democracy and constitution is so real. It is a fact that even today India has a silent majority which is rational and peaceful. They believe in a harmonious society which treats every single citizen with dignity. They have to be mobilised to launch a counter offensive against neoliberalism, communalism and politician-bureaucrat and corporate nexus. This is the task the working class must undertake in this election to save democracy and constitution.

## चुप रहने का अब नहीं कोई काम मेहनतकश के पास है ये बड़ा काम

भयावह है। राज्य के हित स्पष्ट रूप से पूंजी के हित के रूप में पहचाने जाने लगे हैं। इसके परिणामस्वरूप देश में मित्र पूंजीवाद में भारी वृद्धि हुई है। आज शासन की नीतियों के निर्माण और अर्थव्यवस्था के प्रबंधन पर बड़े उद्योग घरानों का प्रभाव स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाई देता है। प्रेस और मीडिया पर बड़े उद्योग घरानों का नियंत्रण और विपक्ष को अप्रासंगिक ठहराने और चुनाव की दिशा को प्रभावित करने का ठोस अभियान एक गंभीर मुद्दा है। पूंजी द्वारा राज्य के इस अपहरण ने लोकतंत्र को कमजोर कर दिया है।

चुनावों में बड़े धन की भूमिका एक सर्वविदित तथ्य है। चुनावी बाँड योजना के मामले में, सरकार ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट के समक्ष यह तर्क देने का साहस किया कि मतदाताओं के लिए यह जानना जरूरी नहीं है कि राजनीतिक दलों को कौन धन की व्यवस्था कर रहा है। सौभाग्य से, सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इस योजना को असंवैधानिक करार देते हुए रद्द कर दिया और यह स्पष्ट कर दिया कि लोगों को यह जानने का अधिकार है कि कौन किसको

फंडिंग कर रहा है और क्या इस लेनदेन में कोई बदले में लाभ पहुंचाने की भावना भी शामिल है। चुनावी बाँड के खुलासे से सामने आ रहे विवरण स्पष्ट रूप से बताते हैं कि सत्तारूढ़ भाजपा सबसे बड़ी लाभार्थी है। प्रधानमंत्री की यह बात कि वे स्वच्छ प्रशासन चला रहे हैं, आज खोखली लगती है। अब जो भी विवरण सार्वजनिक जानकारी में हैं, उससे यह स्पष्ट है कि चुनावी बाँड ने धन देने वाले लोगों को बदले में लाभ पहुंचाया है। उद्योगपतियों द्वारा आईटी और ईडी को प्रभावित करने और उनके छापों और जांचों को बेअसर करने के लिए भी चुनावी बाँड खरीदे गए हैं। संपूर्ण विवरण उपलब्ध होने पर यह पत्रिका इस विषय पर विस्तृत चर्चा करेगी। लेकिन फिर भी, यह एक निर्विवाद तथ्य है कि चुनावी बाँड योजना स्पष्ट रूप से चुनावों में गंदे धन की शक्ति की ओर इशारा करती है।

इस चुनाव में जनता को किन मुद्दों की चिंता होनी चाहिए। चुनाव बेरोजगारी, गरीबी, आय और धन

असमानता, ग्रामीण संकट, सांप्रदायिक आधार पर समाज के धु-वीकरण, संघवाद के अवसान और अधिक महत्वपूर्ण रूप से लोकतंत्र और संविधान को कमजोर करने पर सवाल उठाने का अवसर प्रदान करते हैं। सरकार को हर साल दो करोड़ नौकरियां पैदा करने के वादे के प्रति जवाबदेह बनाया जाना चाहिए। नौकरियां पैदा करने के बजाय, आज हम जो देख रहे हैं वह विशेषकर शिक्षित युवाओं में बेरोजगारी में चिंताजनक वृद्धि है। यह अजीब है कि बढ़ती अर्थव्यवस्था रोजगार पैदा क्यों नहीं कर रही है ? इसका सरल उत्तर यह है कि भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था सेवा केन्द्रित है। सेवा क्षेत्र सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में लगभग प्रतिशत योगदान देता है। तकनीकी उन्नयन के कारण इस क्षेत्र में नौकरियों का नुकसान हो रहा है और भारतीय आईटी क्षेत्र ने अपनी चमक खो दी है। सरकार सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में विनिर्माण का योगदान बढ़ाने के अपने वादे को पूरा करने में विफल रही है। एमएसएमई क्षेत्र के संकट में होने से नौकरी की स्थिति और गंभीर हो गई है। किसानों का आंदोलन गंभीर ग्रामीण संकट को दर्शाता है और अब यह स्वीकार किया जा रहा है कि कृषि विकास में तेज गिरावट देखी जा रही है। गरीबी कम करने के दावे छलावा हैं। पिछले एक दशक में देश में संपत्ति का तीव्र संकेन्द्रण देखा गया है, जिससे आय और संपत्ति दोनों में असमानताएं बढ़ी हैं। किसी भी लोकतंत्र के लिए लक्जरी कारों की बिक्री में बढ़ोतरी और अरबपतियों की संपत्ति में बड़े पैमाने पर बढ़ोतरी को देखना अस्वीकार्य होना चाहिए, जब लाखों नौकरियां खत्म हो रही हों और लोग कोविड के दौरान गंभीर संकट का सामना कर रहे हों। ये वो मुद्दे हैं जिन पर सरकार को उत्तरदायी और दोषी ठहराया जाना चाहिए।

हमने भारतीय समाज का अभूतपूर्व धु-वीकरण भी देखा है। नफरत की राजनीति ने ऐसी स्थिति पैदा कर दी है, जहां एक पूर्वाग्रहग्रस्त बहुमत नफरत किये जाने वाले अल्पसंख्यक को राजनीतिक रूप से हाशिए पर धकेलने में सफल हो गया है। कुछ समय पहले जो हाशिये के राजनैतिक उग्र तत्व थे वे अब मुख्यधारा में आ गए हैं। कानून लागू करने वाले प्राधिकारी के पूर्वाग्रह और राजनीतिक आशीर्वाद ने इन उग्र सीमांत तत्वों को अनियंत्रित होने के लिए प्रोत्साहित किया है। इससे ने केवल अल्पसंख्यक असुरक्षित महसूस कर रहे हैं बल्कि अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर देश की बदनामी भी हो रही है। नागरिकता कानूनों और अल्पसंख्यकों को राजनीतिक स्थान और प्रतिनिधित्व देने से इन्कार करने के कदमों ने भारतीय लोकतंत्र को कमजोर बना दिया है। लोकतंत्र सिर्फ चुनाव नहीं है बल्कि निर्णय लेने और नीति निर्धारण

गतिविधियों में हर समुदाय के लिए समावेशिता और प्रतिनिधित्व भी है। भारत आज इस मामले में पूरी तरह असफल हो चुका है।

एक और प्रवृत्ति जो हम आज देखते हैं वह है विपक्ष को कमजोर करने के लिए जांच एजेंसियों का हथियार बनाया जाना। निर्वाचित प्रतिनिधियों को लोगों की पसंद की पूरी तरह उपेक्षा करके निर्वाचित सरकारों को गिराने के लिए खरीदा जाता है। जिन लोगों के खिलाफ भ्रष्टाचार के आरोप में जांच शुरू की जाती है, उन्हें खुशी-खुशी भाजपा में शामिल कर लिया जाता है और सत्ता में पदों से पुस्तकृत किया जाता है। राजनीतिक शक्ति के अभूतपूर्व संकेन्द्रण के साथ, नियंत्रण और संतुलन के रूप में कार्य करने वाली सभी स्वतंत्र संस्थाएं समझौता कर लेती हैं। पार्टी और राज्य के बीच का अंतर पूरी तरह मिट गया है। सरकार और प्रधानमंत्री की आलोचना देशद्रोह हो गयी है। संविधान को कमजोर करने की हर संभव कोशिश की जा रही है और भाजपा के नेताओं द्वारा खुलेआम आव्हान किया जा रहा है कि उन्हें इतना बहुमत दिया जाए जिससे संविधान में बदलाव संभव हो सके।

ये वास्तविक जीवन के मुद्दे हैं जिन पर इन चुनावों के दौरान राजनीतिक चर्चा होनी चाहिए। लेकिन हमारा अनुभव है कि इन मुद्दों को जानबूझकर मीडिया की मदद से दरकिनार कर दिया जाएगा और चुनावी लाभ के लिए समाज को सांप्रदायिक आधार पर धु-वीकृत करने के लिए विभाजनकारी मुद्दे लाए जाएंगे। इसलिए, स्थिति नागरिकों से सतर्कता की मांग करती है कि वे जीवन और आजीविका के मुद्दों से ध्यान न भटकने दें।

दुनिया भर में यह अनुभव रहा है कि टेड यूनियन आंदोलन ही वह ताकत है जो दक्षिणपंथी अधिनायकवाद और फासीवाद का मुकाबला कर सकता है। इसमें असुविधाजनक सवाल उठाने और सत्ता के सामने सच बोलने की ताकत है। आज जब लोकतंत्र और संविधान के लिए खतरा इतना वास्तविक है तो टेड यूनियन आंदोलन को मौन रहने की आरामदेह विलासिता नहीं दी जा सकती है। यह सत्य है कि आज भी भारत के पास एक ऐसा मूक बहुमत है जो तर्क सहमत है और शांतिपूर्ण भी। ये लोग एक सामंजस्यपूर्ण समाज में विश्वास करते हैं जो प्रत्येक नागरिक के साथ सम्मानपूर्वक व्यवहार करता है। उन्हें नवउदारवाद, सांप्रदायिकता और राजनेता-नौकरशाह और कारपोरेट गठजोड़ के खिलाफ जवाबी हमला शुरू करने के लिए संगठित होना होगा। लोकतंत्र और संविधान को बचाने के लिए मजदूर वर्ग को इस चुनाव में यही कार्य करना होगा।



## **Wage Revision in LIC heading towards finality AIIEA's promise of a Good Wage Revision going to be Redeemed Soon Unilateralism of LIC Management Reprehensible**

The issue of wage revision reached the final stage on March 15, 2024 with the government approving the recommendations of LIC. According to the available information, the wage revision would be effective from 1.8.2022. The additional cost on wage revision would be 17% of the wage bill as on that date. The government has approved 16% loading on the basic pay. This means the new basic pay would be constructed by merging the existing pay with the entire dearness allowance as on 1.8.2022 and giving a loading of 16% on this amount. Consequently, all allowances would also be upgraded. The management's contribution towards NPS for the employees recruited on or after 1.4.2010 would be increased from the present 10% to 14% with the employees' contribution remaining at the existing rate. The government has also approved a one time exgratia to the pensioners and family pensioners.

The struggle for wage revision started with the formulation and submission of the Charter of Demands. While submitting the Charter of Demands to the LIC management on 11th August 2022, the AIIEA had demanded that wage revision in LIC should be based on the strength and paying capacity of the institution and it should be commensurate with the hopes and aspirations of the employees. The focal demand of AIIEA had always been that the framing of the basic pay should be with substantial additional loading as was done in the earlier wage revision. Since Basic Pay is the mother benefit, it will help increase in other allowances as also the

retiral benefits. While submitting the charter of demands and in a number of discussions held thereafter with LIC, the AIIEA had been stressing on this point.

The AIIEA for the last few years had also been demanding the increase in the management's contribution to the NPS for those covered under NPS architecture. This was without prejudice to our demand that the NPS should be scrapped and all employees should be brought under the 1995 Pension Scheme. There are growing struggles on the issue of restoration of old pension scheme in different sectors of the government and surely AIIEA also would be a part of such a larger struggle. Though the LIC has said that a scheme to pay exgratia as a one time measure for the pensioners and family pensioners is approved by the government, the details of this scheme are still not known. The AIIEA has been demanding the updation of pension with periodical wage revision as is the case with the central government employees. The LIC has the financial strength to introduce this benefit and especially in a situation where



huge retirements are taking place and perhaps in the next couple of years, there would be no additional commitment of LIC on the Pension Fund. In such a situation considering the long pending demand of Pension updation is not difficult. The AIIEA is aware that exgratia is not a substitute for the demand for updation and AIIEA will continue to pursue this demand.

The AIIEA was clear in its understanding that wage revision struggle is the most difficult struggle in a class divided society. But the AIIEA had the conviction that by way of struggles on the basis of correct

economic and political understanding, it will once again succeed in securing a good wage revision. The forging of the Joint Front, numerous demonstrative programmes after submission of Charter, memorandums to the management individually and under the banner of the Joint Front, the proposed two hour walk out strike on 12th September 2023 which was subsequently deferred on a written assurance from the management and finally the hugely successful walk-out strike on 10th January 2024 were all part of the tactical line of the AIIEA. The meeting of the leadership of AIIEA with the Chairperson of LIC on 12th January 2024 was a turning point. These programmes of action forced open the negotiations and the management came out with an initial offer of 14% on 16th February 2024. The AIIEA was constantly reminding the management about the core issues of the employees that had to be factored in the wage revision. Right from the second week of February 2024 till up to a few days before the final session on 15th March, a number of correspondences were made in this regard. Now the government finally approving the recommendation of the management for a wage hike of 17% and initiating the process of notification, the wage revision is heading towards a finality.

Though the available information suggests that many of the demands of AIIEA have been accepted; the manner in which the entire exercise of wage revision is conducted lacked grace. The wage revision is not an act of benevolence; it is a legitimate demand of the workforce to a share in the wealth and

prosperity created by the workers. We are aware that the LIC Amendment Act 1981 has robbed the employees of the right to collective bargaining. Utilising the powers vested under rule 48, the government can decide the service conditions of the employees. Despite this, in all the wage revisions after that, negotiations were conducted with the trade unions and notifications were issued only after a general consensus.

But this time around, the beginning of wage talks itself was on a sour note. The insistence of the LIC that retired persons cannot participate in the discussions was clearly in violation of the law and the judgements of the constitutional courts. Thereafter, individual discussions were abruptly cancelled without giving any reason. This is one more sign of the unilateralism in decision making that we have been experiencing since the issue of LIC IPO. The LIC has been upgrading technology, changing the business model and bringing out various measures without taking the trade unions into confidence. Such a situation can only result in deterioration of industrial relations. The Secretariat of AIIEA met on 15th March and has decided to frame appropriate response to this unilateralism.

The General Secretary of AIIEA had a telephonic talk on 16th March with Shri Satpal Bhanoo, Managing Director. He informed MD that AIIEA appreciates the broad contours of the wage revision but has serious reservations about the manner in which the entire exercise was undertaken. The AIIEA suggested to the Managing Director that LIC should call the unions at an early date and inform them the fuller details of the wage revision.

The AIIEA assures the employees that it is committed to bring maximum benefit to the maximum number of employees without compromising on the noble principles of the trade union movement. We request the employees to appreciate the efforts of the AIIEA and remain in readiness to implement any call given by the organisation.



## Successful observation of one-hour walk-out strike in Public Sector General Insurance industry

The Employees and officers working in PSGI companies struck work for one hour on 28th February 2024. The demands included immediate commencement of talks on wage revision, merger of PSGI companies, Recruitment in all cadres, increase in family pension and Universal pension scheme to all as well additional employers' contribution to NPS optees.

The PSGI Companies have made a big turn around (AROUND 7000 CRORES LOSS SET OFF) in the current financial year and the figures are given below:

COMPANY	2022-2023 (Profit/loss) in crores	2023-2024 (Profit/loss) in crores	DIFFERENCE
UNITED INDIA	(-)1691.18	(-)409.33	(+) 1281.85
ORIENTAL	(-)4301.51	(-)28.72	(+) 4272.79
NATIONAL	(-)2151.72	(-)522.18	(+) 1629.54
NEW INDIA	1085.76	925.48	(-) 160.28
TOTAL	(-)7058.65	(-)34.75	6993.9 CRORES

The wage revisions talks in the analogous institutions are progressing well. While in banks the bipartite settlement has already been signed, the government has approved 17% wage hike for LIC employees. Historically LIC and PSGI Companies used to hold wage negotiations parallelly. But there was departure in this in the 2017 settlement also.

The merger of Public Sector General Insurance Companies as announced in the parliament during 2018 budget was not implemented. The additional secretary of Finance ministry has gone on record that the matter has been dropped at the cabinet meeting held in the year 2021. The unions in PSGI are unanimous in demanding for merger of public sector general insurance companies as announced in the budget.

The Government in principle had approved recruitment of Class 1 officers.

United India and New India were successful in securing the nod for recruitment of 300 Assistants. Other two companies are not able to get the nod from the Government. The management is closing down the offices on the plea that there was no staff to man the office. This is unacceptable. When the business of these companies are growing and these companies are making big turnaround, closing down the offices would only retard acceleration of business towards the end fatality in the long run. Hence the demand for recruitment of Class 3 & 4 is very important in this context.

In all analogous institutions the family pension is increased to 30% whereas in PS General insurance the Union Government is refusing to increase the family pension with no reason or justification. The family pensioners are in distress and are struggling to meet their ends with the present paltry

pension.

Without prejudice to our demand of reverting to General Insurance (Employees) Pension Scheme, 1995 to all NPS optees, the unions under the umbrella of JFTU are demanding increase in the employers' contribution to 14% from the existing 10% as was given in the Banks and Central Government departments. The companies can do this immediately as the total cost will not exceed 1 crore per month in each company.

The Joint forum of Trade unions/Associations met online after the one-hour walk-out strike and discussed the future course of action. JFTU decided to intensify the agitations and go for bigger struggles after the general elections are over.

**(Report G.Anand, Vice-President, AIIEA)**

# MY LIC – MY PRIDE CALL A MAGNIFICENT SUCCESS

**A** IIEA's call to observe 13th March 2024 as a mega business day by organising it on the theme of 'My LIC My Pride' has been a stupendous success. We congratulate our members across the country for their spirited campaign to make sure that LIC continues to retain its pre-eminent position in the life insurance market. Our campaign could mobilise 2,32,395 policies and Rs.436.66 crore FYPI on a single day at the all India level. With 53,990 policies and a premium income of Rs. 94.98 crore, South Central Zone came on top of the table among the zones. Cuttack Division under East Central Zone was the top scorer among the divisions with 6565 policies. Balasore Branch under Cuttack division secured the first position among Branches by procuring 1085 policies. It has really been a soul uplifting experience all over the country, true to the glorious traditions of the AIIEA.

The basic objective behind AIIEA's call for a mega business day was to help the institution scale greater heights. The AIIEA sought to achieve this noble objective in two ways. The first was to rekindle a sense of pride and belongingness amongst the employees over the LIC as an institution. The second was to reinvigorate the whole ecosystem and create necessary groundwork for a path-breaking performance in this financial year and beyond. Our campaign has been eminently successful on both the counts going by the reports from across the country.

The members of the AIIEA worked day in and day out ever since the call was given. Each member worked in a manner as if he or she was the brand ambassador of the LIC. The units of AIIEA across the country took up such innovative campaign programmes that would defy the imagination of even the astute market strategists. The plethora of products on offer, the suitability of the plans for different age and gender groups, the relative benefits of the plans from the short and long term perspective were all discussed and debated at great length. The way innovative posters were designed to showcase LIC's financial prowess

and its commitment to nation building by utilising people's money for people's welfare spoke volumes about the ingenuity of the employees. LIC offices across the country wore a festive look in the run up to the mega business day. The commitment, enthusiasm, zeal and enterprise shown by units throughout the length and breadth of the country were the defining features of the campaign. A large number of employees across the country took policies for them and their family members to show respect to the call of the organisation. The most distinguishing feature that one has to take note of is that the campaign was not motivated by any consideration of personal reward or aggrandisement. The running theme was the popularisation of LIC as the finest public sector financial institution; the basic idea was to pave the way for smooth business operations of our hard-working field forces – Agents and Development officers.

We are extremely happy that the noble efforts of the AIIEA were greatly appreciated by almost all the stake holders. The LIC management across the country extended a helping hand. The response of our Agent friends was simply overwhelming. The Employee- Agents interaction programmes organised at various centres offered new insights and opened up new vistas of engagement with them. Development Officers at many centres accompanied our employees to the residences of the Agents and worked as an important link between the Agents and the employees. Policy holders were ecstatic about the efforts of the organisation in reaching out to them and commented at many places that this is an effort worthy of emulation by other public sector organisations also. It goes without saying that the entire exercise has created groundswell of goodwill for the LIC throughout the country. We profusely thank the Agents, Development Officers, Officers and Policy holders for the magnificent response to the campaign.

It is true that the AIIEA gave such an all India call for the first time. However, 13th

March was not the be all and end all of our campaign; it was only symptomatic of our larger commitment to LIC which runs deep in our organisational ethos. The success of the campaign has added new responsibilities to our movement. We must live up to the promises we have made. The 2.32 lakh policies sold on 13th March are not mere business figures; these are not mere cold statistics. These are 2.32 lakh new commitments. We must redeem that pledge by discharging efficient servicing in the offices. More importantly, we must protect and strengthen LIC in the public sector by waging an uncompromising struggle against any move to weaken the LIC under the guise of neo-liberal reforms. The recent surge in LIC share prices and increase in LIC's market capitalisation has opened new debates and shrill cries for further dilution

of government equity from the LIC. We must launch a political struggle to resist any attempt at further disinvestment of the LIC.

The AIIEA is confident about the commitment and capability of our members. Our members have proved again and again that they surpass the expectations of the organisation. They have proved it once again beyond any shade of doubt by displaying in no uncertain terms that they are indeed as proud of the LIC as they are of the AIIEA.

The AIIEA profusely thanks the members, Agents, Development Officers, Class I Officers, LIC management and our valued policy holders for the magnificent response to the call of My LIC My Pride Day and rededicates itself to the cause of public sector LIC.

## JFTU Webinar

A Webinar Meeting of JFTU Constituents was held on 03rd March 2024 to take stock of various issues as above. The meeting was attended by Key Office Bearers of most of the Constituents. It was informed that the on-going struggle and IR action including one hour WALK OUT STRIKE & Sit in Dharna on 28th February received wide spread support from the Officers and Employees.

It was discussed that in view of visible developments on Wage Revision in Banking Sector and LIC, manpower of PSGICs / GIC Re are feeling discriminated and demotivated since the managements of these Companies have failed even to initiate the discussions on Wage Revision. The House unanimously agreed to carry forward the agitation program to achieve the long pending demands and resolution to various issues of common interest as under:

- ▶ Wage Revision due from 1st August 2022.
- ▶ Long Pending demand for Increase in NPS contribution to 14% and improvements in NPS Provisions without prejudice to our demand for PENSION TO ALL under the General Insurance (Pension) Scheme 1995.
- ▶ Long Pending demand for improvement

in Family Pension to uniform rate of 30% without any ceiling.

- ▶ Merger of Companies as per Budget Proposals 2018.
- ▶ Strengthening of Companies/Protection of PSGICs, recruitment in all cadres in all PSGICs / GIC Re etc.

After very detailed discussions on all the aspects of the above issues it was unanimously agreed to undertake the following IR action to highlight our demands and impress upon the Management / DFS for early resolution:

1. Friday, 22nd March 2024: Lunch Hour Demonstration across HOs / ROs / major centres followed by submission of joint memorandum to GIPSA/CMDs/RO Incharges etc and others concerned..
2. 01st April 2024 to 15th April 2024 – Social Media Campaign FORTNIGHT through Online Petition / Twitter / Emails / Press Releases and Physical letters to GIPSA / CMDs / DFS / FM / PMO and others highlighting our grievances/concerns and seeking their support to our issues/demands.
3. Friday 26th April 2024: Half Day Dharna followed by Lunch Hour Demonstrations across HOs / ROs / major centres.



## BONDED FAVOURS:

### On the electoral bond scheme, sordid revelations

#### Disclosures confirm fears of sceptics about electoral bonds

*Courtesy: Editorial- The Hindu March 18, 2024*

**S**ordid revelations that keep pouring from the disclosure of details about the purchasers and recipients of electoral bonds confirm the early apprehension of sceptics that the anonymous political funding scheme will have undesirable consequences. Ranging from likely quid pro quo deals to flagrant proximity between companies being investigated by central agencies and the purchase of electoral bonds worth hundreds of crores by these firms, the scheme has played out exactly as its detractors predicted. Fears that shell companies and loss-making entities may be used to buy the electoral bonds and donate them to parties seem to have come true. The argument that waiver of the rule that political donations can be made by companies only up to a

certain percentage of their profits will render the scheme illegal has been proved right. The Supreme Court of India did well to voice these concerns, flagging the potential for wrongdoing and striking down the bonds scheme in its entirety as unconstitutional. However, the delay in disposing of the multiple challenges to the scheme, without ever staying its operation over the years, has had its own cost. It is a sobering thought for all those invested in democracy to note that the political and corporate classes have lived up to the public expectation that they are ready to use the scheme for mutual benefit rather than solve the problem of unclean funds vitiating the election campaign.

Some details about who donated to which party are emerging now, thanks to

## WITHOUT COMMENTS

### More harm than good

**If CAA was born out of concern for the vulnerable, why not extend it to the Rohingya from Myanmar, the Ahmadiyas from Pakistan or even Tamils from Sri Lanka?**

Editorial INDIAN EXPRESS  
13/3/24)

**H**indu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain or Parsi migrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who entered the country before December 31, 2014 now have clarity about the procedures and paperwork required to apply for Indian citizenship.

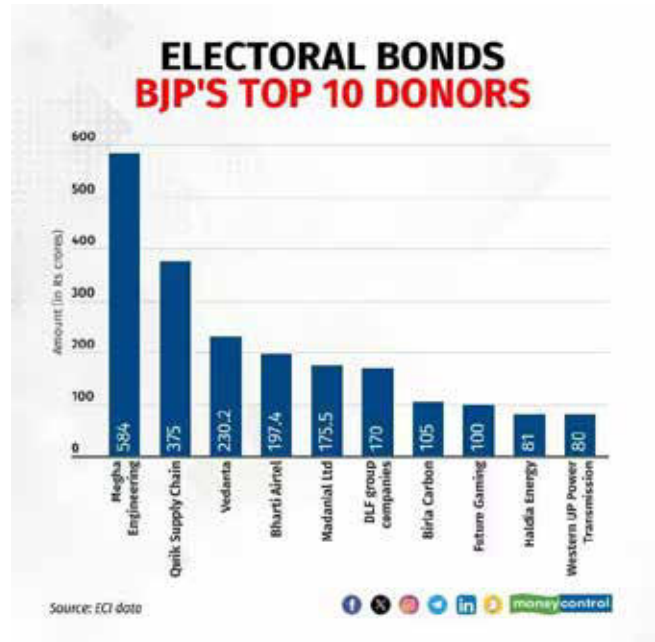
Four years after Parliament enacted the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 (CAA), which excludes the Muslims, the Union Home Ministry has issued the Rules to give effect to the law. After the notification, Home

Minister Amit Shah posted on X, "The PM has delivered on another commitment." CAA was amongst the key items in BJP's election manifesto of 2019 and the party is indeed right in claiming that the government has ticked another ideological box with the 39-page gazette notification.

And, who can have a quarrel with the country opening its doors to vulnerable people from the neighbourhood? Immensely disquieting, however, is that the government has chosen to go ahead with the rules while the Act faces legal challenges. The CAA sparked protests in different parts of the country four years ago. The Rules do nothing to mitigate

a few parties having disclosed their names and given them to the Election Commission of India on the Court's orders. However, it is disappointing that both the ruling BJP and the Congress did not disclose them even in sealed covers. It is possible that there will be more revelations in the coming days when unique numbers given to each bond are disclosed. The role of investigative agencies has been politically controversial, especially under the present regime, but the strong correlation between searches and arrests on one hand, and the dates of purchase of bonds on the other, shows the Centre in a bad light. It will be a dark day for democracy if it emerges that the agencies were used to arm-twist people into making political contributions. The BJP has, unsurprisingly, emerged the largest beneficiary, having received well above ₹ 6,000 crore and nearly half the contributions made through the bonds route. However, its attempt to describe contributions as comparatively low if seen against the fact that it has the

largest number of Lok Sabha members is quite naive, or worse, self-incriminating. Power and influence do attract political funding, but misusing them either by muscular demonstration or the promise of reward will ultimately be subversive of democracy.



the Act's discriminatory foundation that is at odds with the constitutional Right to Equality as well as the idea of a plural India, conceived at the time of Independence.

The government has maintained that Muslims have been excluded because Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh are Islamic countries. However, more than 200 petitions have challenged CAA in the SC on the ground that it violates Article 14, which affirms that "the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India". In the Court, the government will not just be tested on whether it cherry-picked the

three neighbouring countries to keep Muslims out.

The question that it will also have to answer is this: If CAA was born out of concern for the vulnerable, why not extend it to the Rohingya from Myanmar, the Ahmadiyahs from Pakistan or even Tamils from Sri Lanka? The government's notifying the Rules before answering the legal challenge could do more harm than good to those it wants to rescue. It could expose a refugee who receives citizenship to another regime of uncertainty.

CAA has further alarmed all those who have stakes in peace and calm in the Northeast. The December 2014 cut-off has created

unease in Assam, where migration, identity and citizenship have been fraught issues for more than four decades. A case on the cut-off date for migrants to the state is before the Supreme Court.

Moreover, the NRC process has created more faultlines than it has settled in Assam and the issue of who is a "foreigner" continues to fester. Now, the notification of the CAA Rules has, reportedly, ignited another round of protests in the state. In the run-up to an election campaign that portends to be divisive, the government has framed the Rules, paying little heed to questions asked of it. All eyes are now on the Supreme Court.

**The modality of the democratic decline reveals how democracies die today. It is not through a dramatic coup or midnight arrests of opposition leaders, but instead, it moves through the fully legal harassment of the opposition, intimidation of the media and centralization of executive power. By equating government criticism with disloyalty to the nation, the ruling dispensation is diminishing the very idea that opposition is legitimate in a democracy.)**



Courtesy : Sajithkumar, DH

# TURNING INDIA INTO A GRAVEYARD OF DEMOCRACY

**Trinath Dora**

India exemplifies the global democratic recession. The values and mechanisms underpinning Indian democracy have been under sustained attack since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014 and the trend has accelerated since his re-election in 2019. The modality of the democratic decline reveals how democracies die today. It is not through a dramatic coup or midnight arrests of opposition leaders, but instead, it moves through the fully legal harassment of the opposition, intimidation of the media and centralization of executive power. By equating government criticism with disloyalty to the nation, the ruling dispensation is diminishing the very idea that opposition is legitimate in a democracy.

In recent years, a growing number of scholars and political scientists have concluded that India no longer qualifies as a truly democratic country. This grim assessment is finding its way into some of the world's most respected democracy indices. In the executive summary of its Democracy Report 2020, the Sweden-based V-Dem Institute reported that India was "on the verge of losing its status as a democracy" because of the severe "shrinking of space for the media, civil society and the opposition

under Prime Minister Modi's government". Freedom of the world 2020, produced by the US-based Freedom House, warned Indian government's alarming departure from democratic norms. In the 2020 Democracy Index published by the Economic Intelligence Unit termed India as a "flawed democracy". V-Dem and Freedom House delivered even harsher verdicts the following year. In its 2021 report, V-Dem downgraded India from an electoral democracy to an electoral autocracy. In Freedom in the World 2021 report India's rating slipped from "free" to "partly free."

The Modi administration has fiercely rejected any suggestion that India's democracy is backsliding. In November 2022, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister published a working paper titled "Why India does poorly on Global perception indices". After criticizing the arbitrary methodology and conclusions of the three above-mentioned indices, the authors recommend that independent Indian thinktanks be encouraged to "do similar perception-based indices for the world in order to break the monopoly of a handful of Western Institutions." Among the Modi government's more conspicuous



counter-measures is an information campaign focused on democracy in ancient India, launched after India assumed the Group of 20 presidency in December 2022. During the G20 New Delhi summit in September 2023, the government mounted an exhibition and distributed a booklet on the theme of “Bharat: The Mother of Democracy”. This far-fetched notion of India as the cradle of democracy merely bespeaks the Modi government’s desperation to salvage its international reputation.

Two basic developments have cast doubt on the strength of India’s democracy since BJP rose to power in 2014 and especially since Modi secured a second term in 2019. One is the erosion of mechanisms of accountability essential to a functioning democracy. The BJP-controlled legislature has become perfunctory in its deliberations and negligent in its adherence to parliamentary procedure. The judiciary’s rulings are increasingly inclined to rubber-stamp government decisions. Investigative agencies have been used to legally crack down on opposition politicians and dissidents. The independence of oversight bodies such as the Election Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General has been compromised. The opacity in political funding and the murky flow of funds tend to undermine democracy, which was corroborated by no less an authority than the Supreme court in striking down the electoral bond case. At the same time, the government has used carrot and stick policy to control major media outlets, both print and electronic, while reining in civil society groups.

The second alarming development in India is

**The independent Media Ownership Monitor finds in India “a significant trend towards concentration and ultimate control of content and public opinion”. Mukesh Ambani directly controls 72 television channels having a viewership of 800 million. Gautam Adani’s acquisition of NDTV marks the endgame for independent media in India.**

the retreat of secularism in the face of a surge in Hindu nationalism or Hindutva, which has entrenched itself at the very heart of Indian politics. Hindutva is a highly exclusionary, intolerant political ideology that seeks to redefine India as a country “by the Hindus and for the Hindus”. The ruling party is attempting to impose a Hindu-led majoritarianism in the country, including on its school curriculums and textbooks. The Washington Post editorial wrote that the recent changes made in NCERT textbooks is a “discouraging development for the world’s most populous democracy. A healthy democracy must be prepared to re-examine

its past without airbrushing out unpleasant events”. According to news reports, four chapters in different grade levels about democracy and the making of India’s renowned democracy have been sliced. A chapter titled “Key elements of a democratic government” in the sixth-grade political science textbook was dropped. Two pages about the 2002 Gujarat riots were slashed. Chapters on the country’s historic Islamic rulers are either slimmed down or gone. An entire chapter in the 12th grade history textbook, “Kings and Chronicles: The Mughal Courts”, was deleted. Millions of students across India will know of the iconic Taj Mahal, but their textbooks will not delve into the Mughal Empire that constructed it. There are clear signs of the conversion of secular democracy to a majoritarian theocracy.

Over the last decade, Indian media have radically circumscribed their criticism of government due to outright intimidation and structural changes. India has fallen to 161st out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index, ranking below Pakistan, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and Turkey. The independent Media Ownership Monitor finds in India “a significant trend towards concentration and ultimate control of content and public opinion”. Mukesh Ambani directly controls 72 television channels having a viewership of 800 million. Gautam Adani’s acquisition of NDTV marks the endgame for independent media in India, leaving the country’s biggest television news channels in the hands of billionaires who have



Courtesy : News Click

strong ties with the government of the day. While there are a handful of smaller, determined sources of independent news left, they have faced tax raids and lawsuits for their reporting, as it happened with the Newslick, The Wire and BBC. The print, visual and digital media are an integral part of democratic civil societies, the space of social associations and organizations that keeps a watch on acts of omission and commission of the government.

The emerging trends seem to be more durable than the episodic excesses that marked the Emergency of the mid 1970s. The current trends seem to have the capacity to have a long-term impact on the trajectory of democracy in India. The surveillance state keeps a watch on every citizen. A handful of leaders are holding the entire country to ransom by blocking dissent. Data suggests that the filing of sedition cases has become very frequent ever since Modi government came to power. There has also been a spike in cases under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). The act was amended in 2019 to enable the union government to categorize a citizen as a terrorist without going through the judicial process. India recorded a total of 741 cases of internet shutdown between 2012 and 2023 according to Internet Shutdown Tracker. During this period Jammu and Kashmir recorded highest number of shutdown (422). Some of the developments that led to the shutdown include the protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the abrogation of Article 370, the introduction of Farm bills and following Manipur violence.

Prime Minister has called the Indian Constitution the nation's greatest and most sacred text. Yet in the last decade, the Modi administration has run roughshod over the basic principles of the constitution. Parliament has been systematically downgraded. In the first Lok Sabha, the average annual sitting days was 135 but in the current 17th Lok Sabha, the average annual sitting days was only 55. Legislative scrutiny of executive action has been waning in real terms. Parliamentary committees scrutinized 71 percent of bills in the 15th Lok Sabha during 2009-14 before Modi came to power. It was declined to 25 percent and 13 percent during the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha respectively. Some of the most important laws

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and political decisions in recent years – national lockdown, demonetization, farm laws – were passed without parliamentary consultation and over opposition protest.

The growing lack of executive accountability to Parliament is exacerbated by an increasingly pliant judiciary. The Supreme Courts' ruling in recent times on every major political issue that has come before it – the Ayodhya dispute, the Aadhar biometric ID system, habeas corpus in Kashmir, the Prevention of Money Laundering Act – have gone in favor of the Modi government. This marks

a break from the past. The practical difference between the Supreme Court during the Emergency and today is minimal. Some even argue that, today an emergency is simply undeclared. One of the four Justices of the Supreme Court, who held an unprecedented press conference in 2018, Justice Chelameswar warned that “the bonhomie between the Judiciary and the Government in any State sounds the death knell to Democracy”.

The political system is veering towards a full-blown tyranny. It is a monumental tragedy that 146 opposition MPs were suspended in the last winter session of parliament. The Prime Minister gives the slogan of “opposition mukt Bharat”. The Home Minister brags about 50 years of BJP rule. This government seek to fuse the ruling party with the state. So, the Governor's offices, the CBI, the Enforcement directorate – all these institutions have been captured by the Modi government. A whole host of other accountability-seeking mechanisms like the Election Commission and the RBI have been undermined. The aim is to establish a hegemonic one-party rule.

Today, Indian democracy is facing an existential crisis like never before. Although the democratic slide is real, it is not irreversible. The future ahead should be a bitter summer of struggles that would call on citizens and social groups to re-invest in democracy and defeat this autocratic corporate-communal regime.

*(Writer is General Secretary, ECZIEA)*



**The claims that poverty in India has been brought down to around 5% is laughable. World Bank tracks poverty at \$3.65 for lower income countries. If the poverty rate at \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP) is used then 46.54% Indians in 2021 are poor. Poverty is a violation of human's right. Poverty erodes economic and social**

**rights such as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education. Instead of boasting that poverty is eliminated in India, the policy makers must devise such policies that would end deprivation and ensure a decent and dignified life for all citizens.**

# Camouflaging Poverty

**Dr Santosh Kumar Mohapatra**

The claims that poverty in India has been brought down to around 5% is laughable. According to World Bank groups, poverty is “pronounced deprivation in well-being”. The poor are those who do not have enough income or consumption to put them above some adequate minimum threshold. Hence, the poverty line should be determined based on such criteria that one's income will allow him/her to have access to basic necessities and can lead a decent life. But Poverty estimates in India have usually shrouded in controversy and never focus on the capability of the individual to function in society nor to lead a decent, dignified and meaningful life. India's poverty line is just a deprivation or starvation line.

The recent official data regarding poverty estimation appear to have been chosen to align with the present government's preferred narrative of overestimating achievements while camouflaging economic and social malaise through publicity blitzkrieg, distorting or misinterpreting data or interfering data

collection and interpretation. The numbers stink. With the Lok Sabha election approaching nearer, there is a perceptible and discernible attempt on the part of the ruling dispensation at Centre and NITI Aayog to establish that there are no more poor people in India.

The national poverty line by Tendulkar's committee for 2011-12 was estimated at Rs 816 per capita per month (Rs 26 a day) for rural areas and Rs 1,000 per capita per month (Rs 32 a day) for urban areas. Rangarajan's poverty line (2014)- close to the World Bank's line- is measured by a monthly per capita consumption expenditure of Rs 972 (Rs 32 a day) in rural areas and Rs 1,407 (Rs 47 per day) in urban areas as the all-India poverty line. As per Tendulkar's committee report, in India, 25.7% are living below the poverty line in rural areas and 13.7% in the urban area. India, as a whole, 21.9% were below the poverty line in 2011-12. According to the Rangarajan committee, 30.9% of the rural population and 26.4% of the urban population were below the



poverty line in 2011-12. The all-India ratio was 29.5%.

Based on Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)2022-23, Chief executive officer B.V.R. Subrahmanyam of Niti Aayog claimed on February 25, that the proportion of the poor in India had dropped by over 16% in the country to below 5% of the population in 2022-23 from 21.8% in 2011-12. On February 27, the SBI Research report stated that Poverty rate in India fell to 4.5-5% in 2022-23 from 21.8% in 2011-12. SBI economist Soumyakanti Ghosh, took the Tendulkar Committee recommendations for 2011-12 as the base and adjusted it for inflation over the years and also for free food items and other goods and services provided under government schemes. The researchers of the SBI assumed that the poverty line would be at Rs 1,622 per head for rural India and Rs 1,929 for urban areas. It then concluded that poverty has declined substantially.

Economists C Rangarajan and S Mahendra Dev have come up with poverty numbers which show that the poverty rates declined in both urban and rural areas during 2022-23 over those in 2011-12. However, these are higher than the ones put out by SBI Research. Even then, the rate of decline in percentage points was higher in urban areas over this period according to the Rangarajan-Dev estimates than what SBI Research showed.

The biggest mistake is calculating poverty lines by taking the Tendulkar Committee recommendations for 2011-12 as the base adjusted for inflation. Further the inflation measured through price deflator does not take into account hidden inflation, change in every aspect of life or cost of living crisis, impact of war, climate disaster, global warming, rising cost of health, education and lifestyle inflation. Further, how can poverty be measured by taking the impact of some government schemes which neither uplifts the purchasing power of people nor is a permanent solution. Further, such schemes have

been floated by spending money which are generated from the same poor people by way of imposing indirect taxes like GST, excise etc.

Citing the just released consumption expenditure data for 2022-23, a report authored by India's former executive director at the IMF Surjit Bhalla and Karan Bhasin in a leading American think-tank The Brookings Institution has said that India has officially eliminated 'extreme poverty'. Actually, the average monthly per capita consumption (in current prices) in rural and urban areas was Rs 3,773 and Rs 6,459 respectively - 2.5 times the monthly consumption recorded in 2011-12. However, much of the growth in monthly consumption over the previous decade is because of inflation. In real terms, monthly per capita consumption has grown by only 1.3 times in urban areas and 1.4 times in rural areas.

The World Bank updated the global poverty lines in September 2022. The new extreme poverty line of \$2.15 per person per day, which replaces the \$1.90 poverty line, is based on 2017 PPPs. The purchasing Power parity (PPPs) are the rates of currency conversion that equalize the purchasing power of different currencies by eliminating the differences in price levels between countries. But Surjit Bhalla and Karan Bhasin have used \$1.9 poverty line. In analysing the recently



released consumption-expenditure data, Bhalla and Bhasin seem to have converted the \$1.90 threshold into rupees at the IMF-reported PPP rate of 22.9 rupees per dollar. Consequently, their analysis categorizes people as poor only if they cannot spend Rs 45 a day. Can one get two basic meals in Rs 45 a day, forget other expenditures.

According to Ashoka Mody of Princeton University, this approach tantamount to wishing away poverty. Assuming an average annual inflation rate of 6%, as stated in the government's press release, the set of goods that cost Rs 30 in 2011-12 would now cost at least Rs 58. Unfortunately, Indian authorities do not provide inflation data segmented by household income. If the annual inflation were 8.5% for the bottom half of Indian households, they would need roughly Rs 80 rupees per day to cover their basic needs. In that case, India's poverty rate would be around 21.8 %, essentially the same as in 2011-12.

What is disconcerting when the ruling class is talking of developed India, the \$2.15 a day poverty line reflects the value of national poverty lines which is often referred to as the extreme poverty line. For added perspective, the World Bank also tracks poverty at \$3.65 a day, the typical line for lower-middle-income countries, and \$6.85 a day, typical for upper-middle-income countries. Based on the poverty rate at \$2.15 a day, 11.90% Indians are plagued by extreme poverty in 2021, higher than Bangladesh at 9.1%. If the poverty rate at \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP) is used then 46.54% Indians in 2021 are poor. If the poverty rate at \$6.85 a day (2017 PPP) used 82.98% Indians are found to be poor in 2021.

The government never talks of hidden poverty. Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI) has identified five missing dimensions of poverty, that deprived people cite as important in their experiences of poverty and that have been largely overlooked in large-scale quantitative work on poverty and human development: Informal and unsafe work; Disempowerment; Shame, humiliation

and isolation; Physical insecurity, and Subjective ill-being.

According to the 2023 report on food security and nutrition by five UN agencies, 74.1% of Indians, approximately 104.3 crore people, were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021. The report also estimated India's proportion of undernourished population at 16.6% or 22 crores during 2020-2022. and the government's own estimate that around 81.3 crore people require food assistance. This depicts grave situation of poverty in India.

Poverty is a violation of human's right. Poverty erodes economic and social rights such as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education. The International Day (on October 17th) for the Eradication of Poverty 2023 year's theme was universal access to decent work and social protection as a means to uphold human dignity for all people, and to emphasize that decent work must empower people, provide fair wages and safe working conditions, and fundamentally recognize the inherent value and humanity of all workers.

Similarly, universal social protection is urgently needed to guarantee income security for everyone, prioritizing society's most vulnerable members. The theme is also a call to political leaders and policymakers to use human dignity as the guiding compass in all decision-making processes, to ensure the advancement of fundamental human rights and social justice over the pursuit of corporate profits. Instead of resorting to self-patting, the Indian government should guarantee income security for everyone, ensure a dignified life to all and reduce economic inequality, stop vulgar displays of wealth as seen pre pre-wedding party of Ambani family by imposing wealth and inheritance taxes. Instead of boasting that poverty is eliminated in India, the policy makers must devise such policies that would end deprivation and ensure a decent and dignified life for all citizens.

***(The writer is President of CDIEA, Cuttack)***

# वर्तमान भारतीय राजनीति में नैतिकता

## रामजी तिवारी

**The origin and development of democracy is based on the “theory of social contract”. This theory suggests that during the development of society, people realized that they should be subject to a system that was created by them and which benefited them both at the level of individual and society. That is, this theory neither accepts the divine law of governance nor the claim of kings as its representatives.**

शासन प्रणाली के रूप में आधुनिक लोकतंत्र को दुनिया भर में एक आदर्श के रूप में देखा जाता है। इसकी स्वीकार्यता इतनी है कि लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था के मानदंडों का पालन करने वाले और नहीं पालन करने वाले, दोनों की तरफ से यह दावा किया जाता है कि उनकी शासन व्यवस्था लोकतांत्रिक है। इनमें वे देश भी शामिल हैं, जहाँ शासन की बागडोर प्रत्यक्ष या परोक्ष रूप से सेना के हाथों में है। और ऐसे देश भी लोकतांत्रिक होने का दावा करते हैं, जहाँ पर दलीय एकाधिकार है, या विपक्ष के लिए बहुत कम जगह बची हुई है। कहने का अर्थ यह कि आधुनिक लोकतंत्र को शासन प्रणाली के रूप में एक सर्वमान्य दर्जा हासिल है। और इसकी परिभाषा के रूप में अब्राहम लिंकन की इस बात पर भी दुनिया भर में लगभग आम सहमति पायी जाती है कि यह जनता का, जनता के द्वारा और जनता के लिए संचालित होने वाली शासन व्यवस्था है।

लोकतंत्र के उद्भव और विकास के वैसे तो अनेक सिद्धांत प्रचलित हैं, लेकिन सामाजिक समझौते के सिद्धांत को इसके मूल में माना जाता है। इस सिद्धांत की मान्यता है कि समाज के विकास के दौरान लोगों ने यह महसूस किया कि उन्हें ऐसी व्यवस्था के अधीन होना चाहिए, जो उनके द्वारा स्वयं निर्मित हो और जिससे व्यक्ति और समाज दोनों स्तर पर उनका भला हो। यानि यह सिद्धांत न तो शासन के ईश्वरीय विधान को मानता है और न ही उसके प्रतिनिधि के रूप में राजाओं के दावे को। यह किसी चमत्कार या बाहुबल के स्रोतों को भी रद्द करता है। इसके बजाय यह सिद्धांत मूल रूप से व्यक्ति की बुद्धि और विवेक को रेखांकित करता है। यदि हम रूसो के शब्दों में कहें तो यह सिद्धांत समाज के सामूहिक विवेक का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है।

दरअसल बुद्धि और विवेक से संचालित होने के कारण इसको एक नैतिक व्यवस्था भी कहा जाता है। बल्कि कई विश्लेषक तो इसे जीवन शैली के रूप में भी परिभाषित करते हैं। ऐसा माना जाता है कि व्यक्ति का विवेक जब समाज के सामूहिक विवेक से जुड़ जाता है, तो वह सबके भले के लिए सोचता है। यही सामूहिक विवेक अपने नेतृत्वकर्ता का भी चयन करता है और अपने कुछ अधिकार उसको सौंपता है। साथ ही साथ उसी समाज का हिस्सा

होने के नाते उन सौंपे गए अधिकारों को वापस भी हासिल कर लेता है। वह मानता है कि उसके भीतर से चुना गया नेतृत्व वर्ग उसकी भलाई के लिए कार्य करेगा और वह पूरे समाज के प्रति जबाबदेह होगा। यानि यह व्यवस्था नैतिक तरीकों पर बहुत जोर देती है। चाहें वह समाज की नैतिकता हो। और चाहें व्यक्ति की।

अफ़सोस की बात यह कि जीवन शैली और नैतिक विधानों के आधार पर खड़ा हुआ लोकतंत्र आज पूरी दुनिया में कराह रहा है। और वह कराह सबसे अधिक उसके गिरते हुए नैतिक स्तर के कारण है। दुनिया के सबसे ताकतवर लोकतंत्र अमेरिका का वह दृश्य कैसे भुलाया जा सकता है, जिसमें राइपति ट्रम्प के पराजय के बाद उनके समर्थकों ने वहाँ के राइपति भवन पर कब्जे की कोशिश की थी। जैसे वे चुनावी हार को अपने बाहुबल के दम पर पलट देना चाहते थे। या फिर दुनिया के सबसे बड़े लोकतंत्र भारत में होने वाली हालिया दिनों की घटनाओं को हम कैसे नजरअंदाज कर सकते हैं, जिसमें जनता किसी एक पार्टी को शासन के लिए चुनती है और साल छः महीने बीतने के साथ उसके अपने प्रतिनिधि भय और लाभ के लिए चुनावों में पराजित दल की गोद में बैठ जाते हैं। और इस तरह जनता का मैडेट बेमानी हो जाता है। न ही हम अपने पड़ोसी देशों, जैसे कि बांग्लादेश और पाकिस्तान के लोकतंत्र को भूल सकते हैं, जिसमें चुनावो से पहले मुख्य विपक्षी दल को चुनाव लड़ने के अयोग्य ठहरा दिया जाता है और फिर एकतरफा तरीके से जनता का मैडेट हासिल कर लिया जाता है। अर्थात नैतिक विधान के रूप में प्रतिष्ठित हमारी लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था आज दुनिया भर में कराह रही है।

इस मामले में भारत की स्थिति भी कोई बहुत अच्छी नहीं है। दुनिया के अन्य लोकतांत्रिक देशों की तरह हमारे देश में भी तीन तरह की राजनीतिक विचारधारा दिखाई देती है। दक्षिण, वाम और मध्यमार्गी। इन्हीं के आधार पर भारत में राजनीतिक दलों का निर्माण भी हुआ है। लेकिन हालिया दिनों की घटनाएं बताती हैं कि भारतीय राजनीति में विचारधारा की स्थिति काफी कमजोर हो गयी है। दलीय स्तर पर भी। और व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर भी। पार्टियाँ अपनी विचारधारा की बात तो करती हैं और उस आधार पर चुनाव



भी लड़ती हैं। लेकिन सत्ता में आने के लिए अपने से विपरीत विचारधारा की पार्टियों के साथ समझौता भी कर लेती हैं। वे इसका भी ख्याल नहीं रखती कि उन्होंने चुनाव से पहले उस दल की तमाम नीतियों की आलोचना की थी। या उनसे बिलकुल विपरीत राय रखी थी।

नतीजा यह हुआ है कि आजकल भारतीय राजनीति में दो-तीन पार्टियों को छोड़कर किसी भी राजनीतिक दल के बारे में यह नहीं कहा जा सकता है कि कौन किधर चला जाएगा। यह एक तरह से आम मतदाता के साथ किया जाने वाला छल है। और जहाँ दलीय स्तर पर मिलन नहीं दिखाई देता, वहाँ खरीद फरोख्त और लोभ लालच के चक्कर में उस दल को ही तोड़ दिया जाता है। हालिया दिनों में कई राज्य सरकारें इस टूट फूट के कारण गिर गयी हैं और जनता का मैडेट बेमानी हो गया है। इस स्थिति को समझते हुए एक समय में दलबदल कानून की व्यवस्था की गयी थी। लेकिन कोई भी कानून तभी तक सफल हो सकता है, जब उसे मानने वाले नैतिक आचरण करें। कर्णाटक, मध्यप्रदेश, गोवा, महाराष्ट्र, हिमाचल और मेघालय जैसे राज्यों में गत दिनों जो हुआ है, उसे कोई भी कानून कैसे रोक सकता है। मध्य प्रदेश और कर्नाटक में जब दलबदल के लिए आंकड़ा नहीं जुट सका तो पार्टी के विधायकों से ही इस्तीफा दिलवा दिया गया। और फिर दोनों सरकारें अल्पमत में आ गयीं। बिहार में नितीश कुमार का राजनीतिक व्यवहार आखिर किस तरह की नैतिकता को स्थापित करता है।

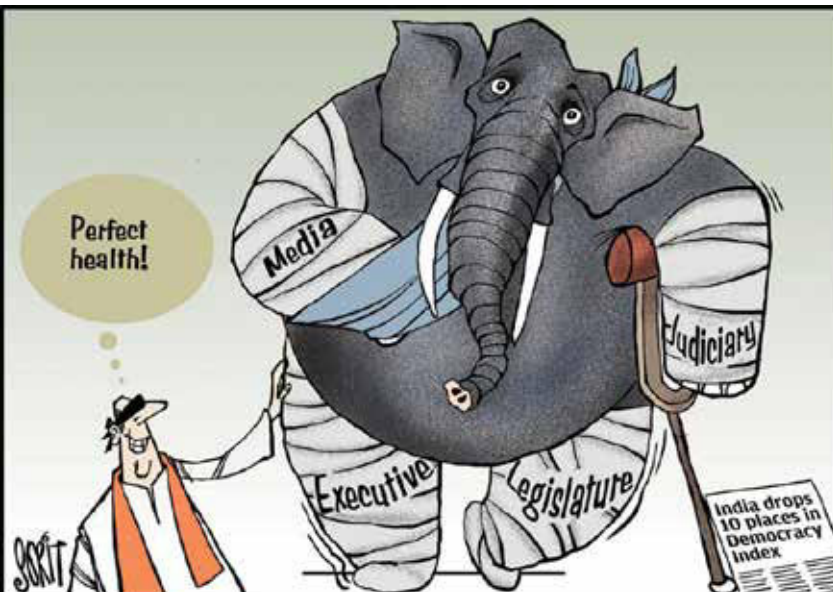
वैचारिक प्रतिबद्धता के अभाव में लोकतान्त्रिक संस्थाओं की स्थिति भी काफी कमजोर हुई है। अब न तो राजनीतिक दल उनके प्रति गंभीर दिखाई देते हैं और न ही जन-प्रतिनिधि। और यही स्थिति जनता के प्रति जबाबदेही की भी है, जिसने उन्हें चुनकर अपना नेतृत्व करने के लिए भेजा है। यह सर्वविदित है कि लोकतान्त्रिक व्यवस्था को चलाने के लिए उस देश की सांविधिक संस्थाएं सबसे महत्वपूर्ण होती हैं। जैसे चुनाव आयोग, सतर्कता आयोग,

सूचना आयोग, सी बी आई, ई.डी., सी ए जी, मीडिया और न्यायपालिका। हालिया दिनों इन संस्थाओं की स्थिति किसी से छिपी हुई नहीं है। शेषन, गिल और लिंगदोह के समय का चुनाव आयोग अब दिखाई नहीं देता। सी ए जी की कोई रिपोर्ट अब जनता के बीच उद्वेलन नहीं पैदा करती। न्यायपालिका के बहुतेरे निर्णय सवालों के घेरे में हैं। और मुख्यधारा की मीडिया अपने इतिहास के सबसे अविश्वसनीय दौर में पहुँच गयी है। जिसकी जिम्मेदारी जनता की आवाज बनने की थी, अब वह उसी को गुमराह करने में लगी हुई है।

दूसरी तरफ भारत में चुनाव सुधार की दिशा में भी कोई खास प्रयास नहीं हुआ है। पैसे का बढ़ता हुआ प्रभाव, कारपोरेट घरानों की बढ़ती दखल और ताकत के इस्तेमाल ने किसी भी सभ्य और साधारण आदमी को चुनावों से बाहर कर दिया है। मसलन निवर्तमान लोकसभा के सदस्यों का आंकड़ा बताता है कि हमारे अधिकांश जनप्रतिनिधि करोड़पति और अरबपति हैं। और उनमें सैकड़ों ऐसे भी हैं, जिन पर आपराधिक मुकदमें लंबित हैं। कुछ पर तो जघन्य अपराधों के भी। यहाँ यह सवाल जरूर उठता है कि इन्हें तो जनता ने ही चुनकर सदन में भेजा है। बिलकुल। यह बात सत्य है। लेकिन इसका कारण यह नहीं है कि भारत की आम जनता अरबपतियों का ही चुनाव करना चाहती है। या कि उसे आपराधिक लोगों में ही अपने नेतृत्वकर्ता दिखाई देते हैं। बल्कि इसका मतलब यह है कि भारतीय चुनाव प्रणाली में गंभीर दोष उत्पन्न हो गए हैं। जनता को शिक्षित करने वाली मीडिया पर पैसे का असीमित दबाव बढ़ गया है। और संस्थाएं कमजोर हो गयी हैं। नतीजतन ऐसे लोग जनप्रतिनिधि के रूप में सदन में चुनकर चले आते हैं, जो सही मायनों में जनता का प्रतिनिधित्व नहीं करते। और फिर भारतीय राजनीति में अनैतिकता के नए-नए खेल दिखाई देने लगते हैं।

किसी भी लोकतंत्र का आधार उसका संविधान, उसकी सांविधिक संस्थाएं और उसकी जनता का जागृत विवेक होता है। यही तीनों मिलकर अपने जनप्रतिनिधियों का चुनाव करते हैं और उन्हें नैतिक रास्ते पर चलने के लिए बाध्य भी करते हैं। भारतीय राजनीति में कम से कम दो स्तरों पर तो उम्मीद जरूर ही बाकी है। पहला यह कि उसका संविधान बहुत अच्छा है। उससे हमें सही दिशा में चलने की प्रेरणा मिलती रहती है। और दूसरा कि भारतीय जनता का विवेक भी हमें आश्वस्त करता है कि वह सही और गलत का फैसला कर सकता है। और इस तरह वह भारत को आगे ले जाने वाले जनप्रतिनिधियों का चुनाव भी कर सकता है। आम चुनावों की पूर्व संध्या पर हमें इतनी उम्मीद तो जरूर रखनी चाहिए।

(Writer is activist of  
VDIEA, Varanasi)



Courtesy : Down to Earth



# Indian Health and Education Sectors in crisis

M Girija

In order to strengthen the health infrastructure in both rural and urban India, the 15th Finance Commission recommended the provision of Rs. 70,051 crore in health grants for the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26. However, after four years, only Rs.25,564.87 crore has been released, which is only 36.5% of the total recommended provision.

The dates for General Elections to elect 18th Lok Sabha have been announced. Before we exercise our democratic right to elect the new government, we need to analyse whether the policies of the present government were beneficial to the working class and the ordinary masses of the country or were only in favour of the richer sections. For this, we need to critically evaluate the policies of the present government.

## Healthcare system remains in ICU

With the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic underlining the need to focus on universal healthcare, it was expected that the Union government would focus on the health and wellbeing of the poor, women, youth and farmers, the most vulnerable groups of the country. It was also expected that the interim budget would address some of the persistent challenges before the health sector. So, it was anticipated that the budget would increase allocations towards building infrastructure, especially in rural areas, address the mental health crisis, usher in health insurance reforms, develop allied sectors such pharmaceuticals, and focus on research and development. If we look at the allocation of Rs.98,461 crore to the health sector in the Interim Union

Budget for 2024-25, we could realise that it is only a marginal increase of 2.6% from 2023-24 (BE). While there is a marginal increase in the total health sector budget, the sector's share in the total Union Budget has declined over the years. A similar trend can be observed when the total health expenditure of the Union government is calculated as a percentage of the GDP. The 143rd report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee notes that such trends of budgetary allocations do not align with the targets set by the National Health Policy – 2017, which is 2.5% of the GDP, and highlights the need to assign adequate priority to the health sector. The Committee further noted that innovation in health is crucial to establish an affordable and accessible healthcare delivery system.

The Finance Minister in her budget speech this year, stated that a committee would be set up to make recommendations on building medical colleges using existing hospital infrastructure led by Public Sector Units under different departments, encouraging vaccinations for girls between ages 9 to 14 for the prevention of cervical cancer, and using the newly designed U-WIN platform to manage immunization. All

these require adequate budget allocations, which are not available as of now. Among other important schemes, the National Tele Mental Health Programme, a component of the National Mental Health Programme has received Rs. 100 crore for 2024-25 (I) (BE), which is 25% lower than the previous BE. Although the public discourse on the mental health crisis has been growing, without adequate budget outlays, universal access to mental health facilities cannot be achieved.

In order to strengthen the health infrastructure in both rural and urban India, the 15th Finance Commission recommended the provision of Rs. 70,051 crore in health grants for the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26. However, after four years, only Rs.25,564.87 crore has been released, which is only 36.5% of the total recommended provision. In the light of the minimal provisions made for health and wellness centres and the requirements therein, it could be seen how the budget has treated comprehensive primary health care needs and the goal of reducing non-communicable diseases.

a minimally declining trend. According to the Economic Survey of 2022-23, Out of pocket expenditure in 2018-19 was 48.2% of the total expenditure on health, which is 16% points below 2013-14. However, as per the National Accounts Statistics (2023), the Private Final Consumption Expenditure has increased by 128% between 2011-12 and 2021-22. All these figures reflect the ability of the public health system to deliver on universal healthcare, which has significant impact on the wellbeing of the most vulnerable sections of the population. To ensure healthcare for all, the current discourse places significant emphasis on a public-private partnership model or an insurance model for healthcare. A similar trend could be seen in the Union government's policies and budgetary outlays towards strengthening insurance schemes such as PM-JAY and the private sector's role in the health care. To truly achieve universal healthcare, such efforts must be complemented by robust public investment in healthcare infrastructure, human resources and services, so that areas and populations that are not covered well by the private sector do not suffer. Therefore, there is a need to focus on developing sustainable and accessible health systems that are publicly funded, by way of dedicating at least the mandated 2.5% of the GDP towards public expenditure on health.

### **Education sector - yet to achieve a pass mark**

Education is one of the key components of the Multi-Dimensional Poverty index, with 1/3 of weightage equally distributed upon two indicators, viz., years of schooling and school attendance. Thus, completion of 12 years of school education is a necessity. However, several systemic challenges such as shortage of teachers, poor school infrastructure, improper monitoring, inadequate transportation and existing socio-economic inequities, etc., are impeding the universalization process. Students from marginalized groups are the most affected and highly likely to be excluded from attaining school education, putting them in a disadvantageous position.

### **Universal Healthcare**

Universal healthcare can be achieved in two ways - either by strengthening public provisioning for health or by reducing the financial burden of accessing healthcare. While the budgetary trend in public provisioning for health shows stagnation in FY 2024-25, Out of Pocket expenditure continues to remain high, with





A larger section of these students depend heavily on public provisioning for education. Thus, the government has a critical and significant role in carrying out educational reforms in the most equitable and inclusive manner and the budget is one of the key strategies to achieve the desired outcomes.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was implemented in 2020 require substantial government expenditure on education in a phased manner. In the Interim Union Budget 2024-25 – which is the 4th budget after the rollout of the NEP 2020, the education sector has received Rs.1,20,628 crore. This is equivalent to 0.37% of the country's GDP. During the first year of NEP implementation, the share was 0.43%. The NEP aspired to achieve 6% of GDP allocation to education. But in reality, it is declining. And this declining share clearly shows how the Union government is committed towards NEP implementation. Because of the skewed distribution of resources, certain groups are grossly underrepresented in the educational systems. Acknowledging the inequity, NEP recommends a series of policies and schemes such as a gender inclusion fund, interventions to address context-specific barriers to female and transgender children's access to education, targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers to incentivize parents to send their children to schools, and providing bicycles to enable more representation. However, these policy recommendations are not backed by adequate budgetary support.

A closer look at this year's budget reveals that 74% of the budget of the Department of School Education & Literacy will be financed through education cess. It is to be noted with concern that the education cess which was perceived to supplement the additional resource requirement for universalizing school education, over time it has become the primary source of financing school education. In the last few years, another change could also be seen in the budgetary priorities. Kendriya Vidyalaya, Navodaya Vidyalaya and PM-SHRI schools, which are considered as 'exemplar schools' of the Union government, are getting relatively higher allocations than the other

government-run schools catering to the larger student population of the country. Similarly, in this period, the budget for world-class institutions rose by more than 700% while the budget for the University Grants Commission was reduced by 44%.

The Sustainable Development Goals 2030 highlighted the need for immediate action towards inclusive and equitable education to all by 2030. The SDG 2023 Report stated that 84 million children and youth will be out of school and 300 million will lack basic numeracy and literacy skills, if no additional measures are taken by 2030. And almost all reports and articles on education in India discuss solutions such as increasing the number of schools, improving school infrastructure, increasing budget allocation by the government to the education sector, providing special attention to the poor and marginalized, etc. The issue of children outside the school education system also requires a solution. It is not just a matter of providing education to children, it is also about providing quality education. And this is crucial for preparing our children to represent and lead the country in the future.

### **Way Forward**

In such a situation, as a conscious section of the Indian working class it is natural for us to expect that those who come to power should adopt policies that are not inimical to the welfare of the working class and ordinary masses of the country; that are not injurious to the democratic and secular character of the Nation. For this, we need to realise that we have a political task to ensure that the 18th Lok Sabha to be formed consists of members who support the cause of the toiling workers, the Farmers and the ordinary masses. These members should also stand up for protecting the communal harmony and secular fabric of the society. The policies that are going to be formulated by the 18th Lok Sabha should assure a bright future to the vast sections of the people of the country. Keeping this political task in our mind, let us approach the ensuing general elections and judiciously exercise our franchise.

**(Writer is Joint Secretary, AIEA)**



# Unemployment 'A Lost Decade'

TVNS Ravindranath

**The country's economy is witnessing a stagnating employment growth rate, weakening employment elasticity, slow structural transformation, and brewing structural problems in the labour market such as low female labour force participation and a rise in the unemployment rate with education levels, according to a study by researchers from IIM, Lucknow; BITS, Pilani and Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**

The security breach in Parliament has put the focus on the crisis of unemployment in India. Two young men entered the Lok Sabha and sprayed yellow gas from canisters, while two others stood outside Parliament and shouted slogans, spraying gas from similar canisters, protesting against the government's inability to tackle unemployment on the 13th December 2023.

The BJP government had promised 2 crore new jobs each year, increasing the share of employment in manufacturing by 100 million and a rise in share of its contribution to GDP from 17% to 25%; formulate a comprehensive 'Women in Workforce' roadmap focussed on dramatically increasing female workforce participation over the next 5 years; encourage industries and corporates to generate better employment opportunities for women, accord high priority to job creation and opportunities for entrepreneurship. Skill India has been flaunted as part of a new National Skills Policy in 2015. It laid out the goal of skilling 40 crore workers by 2022.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, his government gave 1.5 times more jobs in its 10 years than the previous dispensation did in the same duration. Nirmala Sitharaman said, after her interim budget in 2024, that "Since post-Covid, many of those who had been in the urban areas and acquired

some kind of skills, are saying that the rural areas are giving them opportunities to utilise and monetise their skills. Many of them have not even returned back. The significant jump in the female labour force participation rate is an outcome of the decisive agenda set by the government for ensuring women's empowerment through policy initiatives aimed at their long term socio-economic and political development.”

Had the government's promise of 2 crore jobs, each year, been realized, 20 crore new jobs should have materialized by March, 2024. Have they? The reality is that the open unemployment, which was barely 2.1% in 2012, had nearly tripled to 6.1% in 2018, the highest rate in 45 years of India's labour force surveys. According to the CMIE India's workforce has remained virtually stagnant at a little over 400 million over the last 5 years, which means that employment has not increased at all. CMIE, which started an employment survey back in March 2016, shows that the unemployment rate in India was 6.64% of the labour force in December 2018. It was 5.27% in 2019, rose to 8% in 2020, and remained at 5.98% and 7.33%, respectively, in the next 2 years; and it has gone up still further in 2023 (around 8.1%). The stock of unemployed in 2023 October is 42 million, at 10% of the workforce. A stock to which a regular flow of at least 80 lakh young people who are looking for work are added (and it continues to grow each year), as the share of the working-age population rises at an accelerating pace.

For 25 years preceding 2015, the share of manufacturing in GDP had remained stable at around 17%. Thanks to the poorly designed and badly implemented Demonetisation and GST, Manufacturing began shrinking from 2016 onwards, falling to all time low of 13% of GDP in the next four years. It has only just climbed back up to pre-Covid levels (17%). Employment in manufacturing fell as a share of total employment, from 12.8% in 2012 to 11.5% in 2018 (which is way below that of Bangladesh's 16%). It has finally managed to catch up to the 2012 level by 2022. This happened despite the hype about 'Make in India'. This is

what is being called, the lost decade.

After the stringent and abrupt Covid19 lockdowns were imposed in India, millions of workers were forced to migrate back, adding a whopping 6 crore workers to agriculture, between April 2020 and June 2023, as determined by an Oxford study. Under-employed workers in agriculture in 2023 constituted 46% of the workforce and contributed only 15% of India's GDP. The Finance Minister's claim of utilizing and monetizing their skills seems rather wishful.

After falling for years, Women's Workforce Participation Rate is rising, but not for the right reasons. It has risen since 2019 due to a distress-led increase in self-employment, from pre-covid 50% to past covid 60%. Also earnings from self-employment declined in real terms over this period, as half are employed in unpaid family work or working in family farms. Most of it is distress driven unpaid jobs that do not build empowerment. During COVID, Muslims suffered disproportionately among the self employed. In rural areas, for instance, the percentage of persons with no work among the self-employed for the SC/ST population, Muslims and others (non-SC/ST and non-Muslim) shot up from 6.9%, 8.6% and 5.5%, respectively, to 15.1%, 27.5% and 13.7%, respectively.

The country's economy is witnessing a stagnating employment growth rate, weakening employment elasticity, slow structural transformation, and brewing structural problems in the labour market such as low female labour force participation and a rise in the unemployment rate with





education levels, according to a study by researchers from IIM, Lucknow; BITS, Pilani and Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

The study points to significant gender disparity in the labour market and a growing level of unemployment for the highly educated youth than the less educated. In 2020–21, the total labour force in India stood at an estimated 556.1 million. Out of this total, 292.2 million (54.9%) were self-employed, 121.1 million (22.8%) were in regular employment and an estimated 118.6 million (22.3%) were in casual employment. The estimates show that self-employment has been the chief driver of the Indian job market. The overall Female Work Force Participation Rate (WFPR) for those aged 15–59 in 2020–21 stood at 32.46%, a full 44.55 percentage points below that of men. Further, the total percentage of male WFPR (81.10%) in the same year for aged 15–59 years is more than twice the rate for female adults (33.79%).

The study said the unemployment rate in the country rises with education level. “The UR for the illiterate and less educated class (below primary) was 0.57% and 1.13% respectively while, for the highly educated class (graduates and above), it was 14.73% in 2020–21 for the age group ‘15–29 years’. This pattern follows across the years,” the report said. “MGNREGA type of public projects tend to drive out private sector employment while raising wages in rural areas by 5%, increase in LFP among female, improvement in low-caste working bargaining power, increasing rural wage levels, and fall in reliance on high-caste employers,” the report said.

In 2023, the overall Labour Force Participation Rate in India was 39.5%, the lowest since 2017, including the pandemic years. Among men, it was 66% and among women, it was 8.7% — both the lowest since 2017. So, an increasing share of Indians in the working age, were neither employed nor willing to seek employment even after the pandemic. The total number of unemployed was one crore (2012) before the BJP came to power – but it had tripled by 2018 to three crore.

The India Skills Report 2021 argues that nearly half of India’s graduates are unemployable. The Gujarat government has

admitted in the assembly in 2023, that out of the existing 3.94 lakh candidates, who have passed TET and TET examinations and are eligible for teacher recruitment, only 5678 could be recruited as teachers, in the last two years.

India’s IT sector loses shine as jobs dry up. Even as the government pledges billions for tech innovation, IT giants freeze hiring, leaving graduates in the lurch. The hiring slump in the IT sector is being referred to as “unprecedented” and “a near freeze” at the bottom of the pyramid. Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) have given campus hiring a skip for a second year running and the tech industry has a talent glut from successive batches of graduating engineering students. What makes the situation more precipitous from a job’s perspective is a lowering of attrition rates—the IT and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sectors saw a drop in attrition from 27 per cent in 2022 to 16-19 per cent in 2023. This implies that there are no new jobs, fewer employees are quitting, and there is no rush to fill existing positions either. The hiring freeze is hitting hard, everywhere.

The following statements of frustrated workers, who are desperately seeking work in the war torn Israel, will sum-up the prevailing unemployment situation in India. “It is better to earn some money and die in Israel than die of hunger here. When we migrate in our own country in search of jobs and are still not paid enough to run our household, why can’t we move to Israel if we get a handsome amount?” Kushwaha, a graduate in political science from Kushinagar district, asks. “Better to die in war than out of hunger in India”, states a desperate construction job worker from Lucknow.

The government’s continuing efforts to spin a jobs growth narrative means that it is not willing to recognise a glaring problem, and hence no concrete efforts are needed to change economic policy to make the growth pattern more labour-intensive. This means we are confronted with ‘lost decade’ of jobs, with barely 15-17 years left for the demographic dividend to end: a once in a lifetime opportunity in the life of any nation.

**(Writer is General Secretary, SCZIEF)**

### **Publicness of Ambani festivities, move away from traditional reticence of Indian business, represent broader shift in culture**

The relentless attention to the pre-wedding ceremony of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant is a fascinating window into the vast shifts in both the culture and political economy of India. The scripted video releases, and the endless building of an aura around the event, is not surprising. In human terms, the script is enticing: The story has the perfect blend of wealth, power, glamour, family values, piety, with the vulnerability of a personal struggle that not even Sooraj Barjatya could ever conjure. And there is a genuine fascination with the story.

Contrary to what intellectuals are prone to think, these displays of wealth seldom generate resentment or envy. Envy, in any case, is a result of competition with those who are close or adjacent to you. It is not a generalised sentiment towards the wealthy in general. There might be something grotesque and distracting about such displays in a society as unequal as India. But this thought is overshadowed by an admirable sentiment that there is always something disfiguring about resenting someone's wealth and success. If the display of wealth can be gratuitous, resenting it is even more so. As Adam Smith had described it, there is what he called a "peculiar sympathy" with the rich. They represent aspiration more than anything else; and a concrete image of what we might imagine happiness to be. The thought is that if even the rich cannot exercise choices what hope might other lesser mortals have. Which is why publics all over the world have a curious fascination for the rich, a sympathy with their ambition and aspiration, more than resentment at their success.

But there is a slight peculiarity in this instance. Traditionally, the rich parcel out different functions: Some provide the glamour, some industry, some power. In this case, it is the fusion of all these elements

that generates interest. But the second is the incredible publicness of it all, a big shift from the traditional reticence of Indian business. The biggest producers of movies have made themselves the movie, the most powerful controllers of the entertainment industry have themselves become part of the entertainment, and the owners of news have become the news.

Some of this may be due to a broader shift in culture: If you don't perform your identity on social media you might as well not exist. Even the most intimate aspects of our identity are acquiring a plebiscitary aspect to them: What friends think of each other, parents of their kids, in-laws of their prospective brides, expressions of love (or hate), seem to be more than half addressed to an abstract public audience rather than to the object of that sentiment. A sense of publicness used to be irrelevant to a whole range of virtues and sentiments like philanthropy, piety, devotion, compassion, love, friendship, familial bonds. Now publicness is becoming constitutive of their meaning. There is often thought to be a tension in social media performances. There is both self idealisation, presenting myself in the most ideal way, and authenticity: This is who I am. When a public script tries to combine both, as the Ambani wedding scripts attempt to do, the result becomes a perfect embodiment of our age.

But there is also a deeply political aspect to this. Adam Smith, who did not think envy was a potent sentiment, worried about the political power of the rich. For this reason, the rich, while conspicuous in their consumption, always operate in the shadows; the façade that wealth did not shade into other forms of power had to be kept up. By any measure India is a grotesque plutocracy. But it is striking the degree to which the plutocracy is now so transparent, a feature to be flaunted, not a bug to be regretted. The fascinating

thing about the event is not the conspicuous consumption. It is the show of power.

What has changed to make this power now a matter of display? Three things come to mind. They who allocate capital allocate power is an old adage. But what has changed is the myth-making around the capabilities of big capital, not just the system of capitalism. There is the construction that an Ambani (or potentially an Adani), can execute and deliver like no other organisation might. If you want big refineries, ports with fast turnaround times, cheap telecom, global champions, big capital is your only bet. Never mind the regulatory manipulations, to use a polite word, that make this possible: Behold the grandeur of outcome. In some ways, these events also become a hallmark of execution capabilities. Second, in the Ambani case, there is the spectacle of the world showing up: From the Emir of Qatar to Rihanna. This is, in a vicarious way, the world paying obeisance to India. So what if India is not rich. At least it has the world's richest.

It also counts as being Number One in something. This is a projection of national power, without embarrassment. The third is a perfect ideological alignment between Indian capital and the project of Hindu nationalism. Capital has to be visible in that project; it has to make a public show of its devotion to the cause. Capital, in turn, can be recast as a

nationalist project, and no better vehicle for it than a perfectly sanskari capitalist family. All these three make this also a perfect nationalist moment.

Doubtless the Ambanis are charming, wonderful and thoughtful people. And doubtless, all the people present had genuine personal affection for the Ambanis. But as a public spectacle, the idea that one can get anyone, no matter how powerful, to show up and make them dance, is quite a show of power. It also explains something of why we put up with overwhelming concentrations of power. A figure that has overwhelming power can cut everyone down to size. You might be secretary of state or the world's greatest star. But you still show up to an event if the Ambanis summon.

Or in politics, you might think you are an important leader. But you can be cut down to size by the Biggest One in a matter of seconds. So we are quite happy to have One Big Leader cut down everyone to size. Only the ONE is above us. Everyone else, even the most powerful, have to pay their respects. There is something perversely democratic about the idea that we are all beholden to power, be it from state or capital. The point of these public displays is to demonstrate the truth we hide from ourselves.

**(The writer is contributing editor,  
The Indian Express)**

## Trade Union Class at Tirunelveli

On 2nd and 3rd March 2024, Insurance Corporation Employees Union, Tirunelveli Division organized a trade union class for branch office bearers, women sub-committee members and leading cadres in Tirunelveli division.

Divisional General Secretary Com. Ponnaiah spoke on the purpose of the trade

union class. The TU Class was conducted in three sessions.

For the first session, Divisional Vice President Com. Mahadevan presided. Com. Swaminathan, Former General Secretary, SZIEF spoke on "Right-Wing Politics and the Trade Union Movement". Divisional Joint Secretary Com. Pattan coordinated the session and offered vote of thanks.

Divisional Vice President Com. Jain Peter presided over the second session. Com. Senthil kumar, General Secretary, SZIEF was the resource person and he spoke on "Industrial Arena - Challenges and New Directions". Divisional Joint Secretary Com. Srinivasan coordinated the session and delivered vote of thanks.







## Family meet at Thrissur

Like any other unit of AIIEA, LIC Employees' Union, Thrissur Division accords utmost importance to the participation of family members in a bid to maintain its fire-power to confront whatever challenges that might come down the line. Family meet fits well with the idea of involving family members in our activities. As far as Thrissur Division is concerned, it is long overdue as we have conducted it for the first time since the Division came into being.

More than one month's arduous task, including visits to the houses of each member to extend invitation, came into fruition on 25th February 2024 at Palakkad where our comrades accompanied by close kinsfolk congregated at Hotel Top n Town, Palakkad

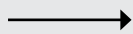
in the district level meet. Adv. P Anil kumar, Government Pleader inaugurated it. In a scintillatingly down to earth presentation, he expounded the cultural and political condition prevailing in our country in a lucid language.

The Thrissur leg of the event took place at Elite Hotel on 03rd March 2024. Sri Karivallur Murali, Secretary of Kerala Sangeeta Natak Academy graced the occasion with inaugural address. The main theme in his speech was an appeal to us to observe vigil so that the cultural invasions unleashed by the rightist forces are kept at bay.

Both episodes were addressed by Com PP Krishnan, Vice President AIIEA. He conveyed the message that safeguarding the institution in public sector was of paramount importance to us to protect our hard-earned rights. He expressed his great concerns about the religionisation of politics and politicisation of religion in the light of the inauguration of the new Parliament building by clergies and the performance of spiritual rituals at the newly built Ayodhya Temple by politicians.

Cultural programmes participated by our members and their families were the another attraction in both places that added festive ambience to such a grand solidarity. The co-operation of family members was also solicited for the successful culmination of our "My LIC My Pride" campaign.

Both family meets were presided over by our President Com.K R Vini and General Secretary Deepak Viswanath welcomed the gatherings. At Palakkad Com. Pradeep Sankar P, Convener, District Committee proposed Vote of thanks and Com. T C Vinod, Convener, District Committee fulfilled this duty at Thrissur.



For the third session Divisional Vice President Com.Chenbagam presided. The theme of the session was "Who are we and Who is our mind". Honorary President of Tamil Nadu Progressive Writers Artists Association, Com.Tamilselvan spoke on the theme.

Divisional Joint Secretary Com. Murugan coordinated the session and offered vote of thanks.

For the fourth session the Divisional Treasurer Com. Krishnan presided over the fourth session. Divisional President and South Zone Vice President Com. Muthukumarasamy addressed the session and the topic was "Whether the worth of shade is only known when the sun is beating down hot". Divisional Assistant Treasurer Com. Tennison Daniel coordinated the session and delivered vote of thanks. More than 85 comrades participated in the TU Class.



## LICPA, KMDO I CONFERENCE

The 26th Annual General Meeting of The LIC Pensioners' Association, Kolkata Metropolitan Division-1 was held on 15th March, 2024 at the L I E Sports Club hall, Kolkata. The meeting was inaugurated by Comrade Chandrasekhar Bose, the founder member of AIIEA and great leader of insurance employees' movement. His august presence and motivating inaugural speech inspired the pensioner members and others present in the meeting. In his speech he strongly criticised the anti-people policy of the central government and appealed to the pensioners to oppose it. He urged upon them to join the struggle of the insurance employees led by AIIEA against any further move to privatise LIC or the nationalised General Insurance Companies.

The meeting was also attended by Com Priyabrata Bagchi and Debaprasad Gayen, Joint Secretary and Vice President

of AIIPA respectively. The leaders of EZIEA, Kolkata Division Life Insurance Employees' Association, GIPA (West Bengal) and the Pensioners' Associations of adjoining divisions were also present in the meeting. They expressed their solidarity and support to the insurance pensioners' just demands and their movement under the banner of AIIPA.

The meeting was attended by 102 members, 26 invited guests were also present. A report was placed by the General Secretary before the house, supporting which 4 delegates spoke.

The meeting concluded with the acceptance of the report and election of 24 executive body members and 13 office bearers unanimously including Com. Amitendra Charterjee, Jyotirmoy Bhattacharyay and Rajat Dutta as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the year 2024.

The meeting was a grand success.

## 11th Divisional Conference of LICPA Thrissur Division

LIC Pensioners' Association, Thrissur Division held its 11th Divisional Conference on Saturday, 17th February, 2024 at NGO Union Hall, Thrissur. The meeting was presided over by the President, Com.K.Unnikrishnan. Earlier Com N Vasudevan welcomed the gathering.

The Conference had the privilege of having Com.M Kunhikrishnan, General Secretary, AIIPA to inaugurate it. He commenced his speech by pointing out that "the Central Government which is expected to implement welfare measures such as pension is donning the mantle of the liquidator of it. Protection of such precious rights is possible only with a unified struggle. LIC is the backbone of our economy but the powers that be is trying to privatise it through the sale of its shares. Pensioners should muster the unity to fight for protecting it in public sector", he urged.

Com M Rajeev, General Secretary presented the report and the Treasurer Com PK Bahuleyan tabled the statement of Accounts. After discussion, both report and statement of accounts was unanimously approved.



# Conference of LICPA Howrah Division

The 28th Annual General Conference of LIC Pensioners' Association, Howrah Division held at Kolkata, conducted by a Presidium formed with Comrade Mohanlal Ganguly, Comrade Subhash Mitra and Comrade Rathindra Nath Chakraborty, started with a brief welcome address by the President and a condolence resolution. A large number of Pensioners and guests were present.

The Conference was greeted by Comrade Jyotirmoy Bhattacharjee, Comrade Deb Prasad Gayen (Vice-President, AIIPA), and Comrade Ratan Roy on behalf of Kolkata Metropolitan (1), (2) and Kolkata Suburban Division Pensioners' Association.

The report of the Executive Committee placed by Comrade Rammohan Das, the General Secretary, dealt with the Political, Economical and Social Situations of the country and the world. It discussed the demands of Insurance Pensioners, the struggle of AIIPA, joint movement, the duties of the members and the latest position of the case pending in the Supreme Court.

The report of the Executive Committee and the Audited Accounts for 2023, after discussion, were adopted unanimously. Twenty two resolutions on different issues have been accepted. Comrade Gunindra

Nath Chatterjee, Central Committee Member, AIIPA, greeted the Conference.

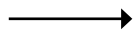
Comrade Gopal Das, President, Howrah Division Insurance Employees' Association congratulating the Veterans spoke about the policies of Central Govt. which is anti people, anti democratic and pro Corporate. He told that the demands of the Pensioners will be realised by joint struggle only.

Sri M.Ghora, The Senior Divisional Manager of our Division graced the Conference with his presence and greeted the Pensioners.

Special felicitation was given to Comrade Mohanlal Ganguly, President of the Association and Comrade Premsankar Chowdhury, the senior most delegate presented in the conference was felicitated.

Comrade Gopal Das and Comrade Paul Mondal were elected as Honourary members of the Association for 2024. A new Executive Committee for 2024 of 24 members with Comrades Mohanlal Ganguly, Rammohan Das and Dulal Chandra Jana as President, General Secretary and Treasurer were unanimously elected by the Conference.

The Conference concluded after Vote of Thanks given by Comrade Mohanlal Ganguly, President of the Association.



As a mark of honour to the elderly pensioners, those who had laboured to come to the Conference were presented with shawl. They were Com.M Kochugovindan, Com.C A Sivasankaran, Com.PNGK Pillai, Com.M.Ananthapadmanabhan, Com.M R Parameswaran, Com.Rosy Lonappan, Com.C S Menon and Com.N Krishnankutty Nair. The Conference also honoured Com M Kunhikrishnan for having produced a film 'Nishedhiyude Atma Sakthi'(inner strength of a rebel), based on the life of Swami Ananda Thertha (disciple of the eminent social reformer of Kerala, Sreenarayana Guru). That documentary won the 1st prize at the Panchjanya Film Festival held at Chittur.

Com.A Chaitanyakrishnan, Vice President LICPA introduced resolutions on full neutralization in the DA of those who retired before 01.08.1997, increase of the exgratia pension for the retirees of pre 01.01.1986 period, timely updation of pension

and protection of LIC in Public Sector by abandoning the plan to divest the shares of it.

Com.PGN Varma, Central Committee member of AIIPA greeted the Conference. He used the occasion to recapitulate the glorious history of our struggle for achieving the pension. Smt.C Geetha, General Secretary, LIC Class I Officers' Association Thrissur Division began her speech by reminiscing the affection and security she received from the seniors after her entry into LIC. She also plagged the need for unity among retirees. Com.Deepak Viswanath, General Secretary, LIC Employees' Union, Thrissur Division concentrated on the contemporary character of LIC in his greetings. This hallowed institution is hurtling towards embracing centralisation and the interest of the share holders are trumping the concerns for the policy holders, he concluded.

The curtain for the proceedings of the meeting was rung down after the Vote of thanks by Com.M.J.Vincent, Jt. Secretary, LICPA, Thrissur Division.





# International Women's Day at Hyderabad

International Women's Day was celebrated at Hyderabad division in a grand manner. Com Padmasree, Secretary, CITU, Telangana State and Editor of "Mana Worker" magazine was the chief guest. Women officers of RM cadre from Zonal office were invited on the occasion. Com. Shreekanta Mishra, General Secretary, AIIEA; Com. TVNS Ravindranath, General Secretary, SCZIEF; Com P. Sujatha, Vice President and other leadership from Zonal Federation and Hyderabad Division along with retired employees' association attended meeting. Women comrades from DO, ZO and P&GS base units and from all the city branches attended the meeting. Com. V. Mythili, Convenor, Women Subcommittee, ICEU, Hyderabad, giving brief introduction about the occasion, has invited the dignitaries on to the dais. Com. BS. Saraswathi, Co-Convenor, has rendered a KAVITHA (poem) on this occasion.

Com. Padmasree, in her address touched upon the historical significance of celebrating IWD and mentioning the UNO theme of "Inspire Inclusiveness", gave a call to the cadres to work towards bringing this in different sections of the society. She also appreciated the women participation in union activities and remarked on the advantageous position in which LIC employees are placed today. She reiterated the importance of struggles to retain LIC in public sector and assured CITU would always stand by LIC whenever it is required.

Smt. Deepa Sivadasan, RM, P&GS while addressing the gathering strongly advocated women to manage their own finances. She also impressed upon the audience the gender parity existing in the society and women's responsibility in curbing it.

Com. P Sujatha in her address remembered the contributions and sacrifices made by pioneers in women's movement which led to creation of Women's Day. The strides made by women in various fields are all because of women like Savithri Bai Phule, Durgabai Deshmukh and others who made it easy for next generation.

Com. Shreekanta Mishra, General Secretary, AIIEA while extending his warm greetings to women comrades also cautioned to be aware of the divisive forces at play with the election season fast approaching. In society in general and particularly in AIIEA, women contribution is invaluable and their traits of compassion, perseverance and fortitude provide the necessary push for any movement.

Com. TVNS Ravindranath, GS, SCZIEF while conveying his wishes to the audience lauded the efforts put in by women sub-committee members in felicitating senior retired women comrades. He said this activity will rekindle the spirit of belongingness with the union amongst the cadres.

Com. G. Thirupathaiah, JS, SCZIEF and GS, ICEU, Hyderabad in his closing speech expressed his happiness over huge mobilisation of cadres. He congratulated the women sub-committee for touring all City branches and honouring the retired women comrades. He briefed on the charity activity taken up by Women Sub-committee wherein a water dispenser and a computer are given to Govt. Deaf and Dumb school at Malakpet.

The meeting was presided by Com. N Jhansi Lakshmi, VP, ICEU, Hyderabad and vote of thanks was proposed by Com. BS Saraswathi, WSC Co-convenor, ICEU Hyderabad.

# Women’s Day celebration at Bengaluru

International Women’s Day program on 10th March 2024 was celebrated jointly by CITU, AIIEA, AIDWA, JMS, CGE,KPRS, SFI,& BEFI at Souharda union office with the slogan “ defeat the hate politics and to protect the democratic rights of women”. Comrade M Vijay Kumari, Convener, Women Sub committee ICEU DO 2, Bangalore in her initial remarks, quoted the message of lady Clara Zetkin and her struggle in achieving equal wages for women and voting powers to women. Lalita Shenoy from BEFI welcome the gathering.

Chief Guest Dr Vasundhara Bhupati, renowned progressive thinker in her address expressed her concern over depicting women as a commodity to improve profit making by corporate and various media. She also highlighted how women and children are exploited at work place. Discrimination against women is still a matter of grave concern. Even matters of her health like surrogacy, abortion are ignored in the male dominated society.

Comrade Anita, leader of Central government employees association said that women are not recognized and not given any prime posts in the office work nor in the union. Many IAS women officers cannot implement policy matters. All the works are getting outsourced and such employees are neither given proper salary and nor any social security, she said.

Com DEVIKA from CITU said years together we have fought for wages and equal rights, still we have not got equality. Gender discrimination is on rise. Multinational companies bringing in technology harass women in IT sector where they work in shift system.

Com VIMALA (AIDWA) condemned the fact that women are commodified and giving rebate in LPG rate as gift to women is really disrespecting the women. On this international women’s Day, we have to pledge to defeat the hate politics and work for safeguarding the dignity of women.



Com S K Geetha (AIIEA) said that politics of hate has entered every household through the television news and serials. These serials propagate that women are insensitive to another woman. Women are not as safe as our political leaders claim to be as we are seeing incidents of atrocities, dowry and domestic violence on the rise day by day. Com Mangala Kumari from JMS spoke about the issues of unorganized workers, lack of social security and minimum wages for the women.

Com Gowamma in her presidential address spoke about death of women in dowry cases and plight of acid victims. We have to protect the democratic right of women. The program was well attended by workers from both organized and unorganized sectors.

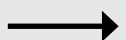
**Report: Com. Shantha LK Rao**

# Women Convention at Guwahati

The 12th Women Convention of GDIEA was successfully held on 2nd March 2024 at Guwahati. The cultural troupe of GDIEA led by Com. Ghana Deka performed a chorus which excelled the convention.

A presidium consisting of Com. Sibani Bhattacharjya and Com Sayeri Chakraborty conducted the convention and the purpose of the convention was explained by Com. Sarada

Goswami, one of the joint convenors of the Women Sub-Committee. Com.Arпита Roy , Joint Convenor of Women Co-Ordination Committee, EZIEA, inaugurated the convention. In her one-hour long deliberation, she focused on the impact of neo-liberal economic policies on common people in general and on women in particular. She dealt on every nitty-gritty of gender discrimination, deprivation



## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATED IN BHOPAL DIVISION

Like every year, this year also International Women's Day was celebrated in Bhopal Division with full enthusiasm and gaiety. As we all know that Women's day symbolizes the respect of women and their contribution to the progress of society. Due to holiday on 8th MARCH, a religious festival, it was unanimously decided by the Women Comrades to jointly celebrate IWD on 12th MARCH. Women comrade of Class-I Federation and BDIEU under the banner of BDIEU Women Sub Committee participated in the celebrations.

The Chief Guest in IWD Celebration Mrs. SANGEETA KUMAR, a motivational speaker spoke on the various facets of women related issues. She delivered her speech on work life balance in a very interesting and informal way particularly with reference to today's busy life and hectic activities. She also suggested some measures to relieve tension

and lead a comfortable life. In her spellbound speech she quoted some tips also as how to use juggling of priorities to maintain the so-called work life balance. This session was very interactive and was liked by all the participants. Participants also asked questions and the answers were also given in a simple manner. She also taught some steps of ZUMBA DANCE, an African Tribe dance to keep fit and healthy.

Mrs. Uma Ganpati, COSP, In-Charge of Bhopal Division was also the Chief Guest on this occasion. She also spoke on IWD celebrations. In her speech she said that despite being a difficult situation women have to continuously contribute to the betterment of the society.

Mrs. Bhawna Dixit conducted the proceedings. About 75 women attended the celebration. Mrs GS JAYASHREE proposed a vote of thanks.



and violence being faced by the women throughout their lives and living in the society. She urged upon women comrades to come forward to make the Women Sub-Committee more active and to join united movement with other section of toiling mass and to strengthen the trade union movement.

Com. Pitambar Rajbhandari, General Secretary of GDIEA; Com. Maitreyee Misra, Ex Joint Convenor of Women Co-Ordination Committee, EZIEA; Com. Pallavi Bharali, (Ex Convenor of Women Sub-Committee, GDIEA; Com. Tarulata Paul Sarkar (LICI Class-I Federation) and Com. Asish Paul, joint Secy, GDIEA also greeted the convention. All of them appealed the women employees to come forward in order to strengthen our organisation (AIIEA).

Com. Sarada Goswami, Jt. Convenor of the Women Sub-Committee of GDIEA, placed the draft report of the Women Sub-Committee. Com. Madhuraka Chakraborty, Com. Mitali Lodh, Com. Rajkumari Chanda and Com Aparna Dutta Choudhury participated in the discussion on the report and gave valuable suggestions. After summing up of the discussion on the report by Com. Sarada Goswami, the report was

unanimously accepted. The convention also adopted several resolutions.

The convention elected a new Sub- Committee with Com. Sibani Bhattacharjee, Com. Sayeri Chakraborty, Com. Rajkumari Chanda and Com. Rubi Rajkhowa as convenors.

The convention came to an end with the presidential address by Com. Sibani Bhattacharjya followed by the vote of thanks by Com. Purnima Das, DO Base Unit. The convention was a splendid success.







## Cuttack City Co-ordination Committee observes Women's Day

Cuttack Division Insurance Employees' Association (CDIEA) observed International Women's Day on 7th March 2023 (as 8th March was Maha Shivaratri) at LIC Divisional Officer premises, Cuttack with other constituents of Cuttack City Co-ordination Committee of Unions & Associations. Com. Manorama Mohanty, zonal convener of ECZIEA presided over the meeting.

Addressing the meeting as chief guest Com Puspa Dash, former state president and Secretary of AIDWA and convener of state Working Class Women Coordination Committee discussed about historical background of women's day and described how women are experiencing gender inequality, discrimination and violence from birth to death. She

advised women comrades not to tolerate injustice but wage battle against injustice. She told how religious fanaticism; communalism hinder women's progress. However, she cautioned that women should not forget their moral responsibility, family obligations. She further said that men are our friends and not enemy in our battle for gender equality.

Shri Anata Bhusana Rath, Sr Divisional Manager spoke about the theme of women's day 2024: Invest in Women: accelerate progress and campaign them: inspire inclusion. He gave some examples of LIC lady agents under Cuttack Divisions who have marvellous achievement. Com Sanghamitra Jena, vice president of All India Students' Federation (AISF) was felicitated by Smt Binita Rath, spouse of Sr DM of Cuttack Division, for her immense contribution towards students' movement, women's development and fight against injustice of both state and central government. Responding to her being felicitated, she urged women comrades to fight against injustice perpetrated on them and emphasized to change the patriarchal mindset of both men and women.

At the outset, Com Abhaya Das, General Secretary of CDIEA gave introductory address while com. Kabita Das gave vote of thanks. Some other lady comrades also spoke on the occasion. A large number of women comrades and male comrades were present in the meeting despite inclement weather. It has been decided to donate an Aqua guard water purifier an old age home.

The Women Sub Committee under the banner of NZIEA, Karnal Divisional Committee celebrated the International Women's Day on 7th March. The meeting was presided by Manager (Claims), LIC DO Karnal Smt Kailash Relhan being the senior most women in LIC DO Karnal. Entire program was attended by Sr.DM Karnal Sh.N.S.Raghav and Manager ( P&IR ), Sh.Parvinder Kumar Chhabra. Chief Guest was Dr.Sonika Ahlawat, Scientist NABGR who do research on Animal Husbandry. Coms.Virender Malhotra, Divisional President & Neeraj Arora, Divisional Secretary, NZIEA, Karnal Divisional Committee also sat on the Dias. The meeting was conducted and initiated by Com.Pushp Lata, Convenor, Women Sub Committee who initially spoke on the historical background of International Women's Day and dealt in detail about the issues of Working Women, Domestic violence, political, socio policies, gender parity and gender gap etc. Com.Neeraj Arora, Divisional Secretary, too greeted the gathering. In the morning Women

Sub Committee leaders and leadership of the organisation along with women officers went to slum area in the Karnal vicinity to distribute Stationery items viz. Notebooks, Pencils, erasers etc to 48 students of slum area school under a temporary bamboo hut. The lone teacher and children were very appreciative of the gesture. The school was given three Daris/Mats for sitting and studying on them and sweets were also distributed.



## IWD celebrations at Ballari II



The Insurance employees' union base unit 2 Ballari under Raichur Division observed International Women's Day by fulfilling a social commitment to the true tradition of AIIEA. The Base unit donated 43 inches Android flat TV for the best benefit of the students of Kannada Govt. Higher Primary school situated in Bapuji.Nagar, Ballari. Every year base unit 2 with the help of all classes of employees and involving them undertake a social work keeping in mind the needs of a school though voluntary contribution of comrades. Retired teacher of the same school Smt.Sujatha, aged

71 years was honoured for her relentless work of daily teaching even after her retirement to the students of this school. Head Master Sri. Thippeswamy, branch manager Sri.Sampath Kumar, Sri. Venkataramudu, ABM(S) Com. DV Suryanarayana Secretary, Com. Vignesh Treasurer participated in the program. Com.V. Ravi kumar presided over the meeting. All classes of women employees of the branch actively participated in this activity. In this manner the International Women's Day was celebrated to the true tradition and character of AIIEA.



## Com R Narayanan Birth Centenary convention

On the occasion of the 101st birth anniversary of Late Com R.Narayanan, Former Vice-President, AIIEA was held on 5/3/24 at Madurai, a convention was jointly organised by ICEU Madurai, Thanjavur and Tirunelveli units.

“Silver Jubilee of Lockout Struggle and Experiences” was the topic addressed by Com T Senthilkumar General Secretary SZIEF. Leading cadres of three divisions and General insurance, Madurai region participated in good number.

Com R.S.Mani Senior leader of Dindigul TU movement shared Com RN contributions to working class movement. Com N Srinivasan, R Punniyamurthi (Senior leaders of Thanjavur

division) and K Swaminathan Former General Secretary SZIEF addressed and recalled their association with great leader Com R Narayanan.

Ms N Meenakshi D/o Narayanan also addressed and shared experiences of how her beloved father nurtured progressive thought among their family members. Ms Vijayalakshmi W/o Com R Narayanan was honoured and felicitated by Com N.P.Rameshkannan General Secretary ICEU Madurai division.

Com G Meenakshi Sundaram, Former General Secretary, ICEU Madurai division garlanded the portrait of Narayanan.

Com Selvaraj President ICEU Thanjavur welcomed gathering and Com Ponnaiah General Secretary, ICEU Tirunelveli rendered vote of thanks.

Com N Sureshkumar President ICEU Madurai Presided.

Many Insurance companies, mostly non-life companies, are planning to file a writ petition over the tax demand on commission paid for co-insurance, seeking a clarity from the court as levying Goods and Services Tax (GST) on the commission will amount to double taxation. These companies are waiting for the GST Council meeting to get clarity over the issues of a collective tax demand of Rs.12,000 crore. The companies when approached the Finance Ministry they were told that the GST Council would give the clarity. As the meeting of the GST Council is not in sight the companies are planning to go to court. The stand of these insurers is that the GST on the entire value of insurance premium is already paid by the lead insurer, including on the share of premium belonging to the co-insurer, the tax demand would tantamount to “double taxation” and it is a settled law that the revenue cannot collect tax twice on the same service.

The IRDAI, after consultation with the Advisory Committee, and with the previous approval of the Central Government has taken the decision that the percentage cession of the sum insured on each general insurance policy to be reinsured with the Indian Re-insurer (GIC Re), will be 4% (four percent) during FY 24-25, as it was in the previous year, except the terrorism premium and premium ceded to Nuclear pool wherein it would be made ‘NIL’. GIC Re, which had over Rs 34,000 crore of premium in Fy23, had around 40 per cent of its profitable revenue out of the obligatory cession during the period. The obligatory cession was reduced from 5 per cent to 4 per cent in FY23. The government has kick-started the process for additional stake sale in General Insurance Corporation (GIC Re), with roadshows in key global financial hubs including New York, Singapore, Hong Kong, Dubai and London. According to an official source, the outreach elicited “quite positive response” from global investors.

AIP Online Bureau reports that the General Insurance industry, propelled by a few private sector and PSU general insurers along with the Health insurance business, will close the current fiscal with a premium of over Rs. 3 trillion. According to CareEdge Ratings, “the non-life insurance market is expected to grow 13-15 per cent in the medium term, primarily driven by the health and motor insurance segments, and increasing disposable income levels”. It further reveals “the health insurance segment continues to remain on track to breach the ₹ 1 lakh crore mark whereas the motor segment crossed the ₹ 80,000 crore threshold in

## INSURANCE NEWS IN BRIEF

● **A.M. KHAN,** Dharwad

FY24”.

◆ According to a data from online insurance broker PolicyBazaar the average ticket size of retail health insurance in India has increased by nearly 48% over the last six years to Rs.26,533. This jump, according to PolicyBazaar, is due to medical inflation in the country, which is about 14% to 15%, and the health insurers follow suit by increasing the premium for the health insurance policies.

◆ Department of Financial Services has again asked the banks to check mis-selling of insurance as it has been regularly getting complaints that fraudulent and unethical practices are being adopted by banks and life insurance companies for procuring policies from the bank customers. There have been instances where life insurance policies were sold to customers aged above 75 years in tier-II and III cities. When resisted by customers, branch officials will sheepishly admit that they are under pressure from the top. Insurance products are pushed when customers go to seek any kind of loan or buy a term deposit.

◆ For the month of February 2024, the life insurance sector witnessed a robust growth of 48.4% in the first year premium amounting to Rs.33,913.18 crore. This increase is due to increase in LIC’s group single premium which is 80% of the total single premium segment for the month of February 2024. With this LIC’s year to date business shows a reduction in the negative growth rate from -13.06% in the month of January 2024 to -8.35% for the month of February 2024 and the market share has improved to 58.61%. LIC has paid to Government of India an interim dividend Rs.2,441.44 crore.

◆ Zurich Insurance Group will buy a 70% stake in Kotak Mahindra Bank’s general insurance companies by paying 55.60 billion rupees (nearly \$671 million) upfront. This deal will be the largest investment by a global insurer in a non-life insurer in the Indian market.

◆ Fitch Ratings says “European Reinsurers’ January 2024 renewals show that their underwriting margins are close to peaking as supply-and-demand dynamics become more balanced. Premium income growth was generally higher than in 2023, driven more by volumes than by price increases”.



## WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE

● S. SRIDHARA, Mysore

- ▶ **TAMILNADU PRIMARY CO-OPERATIVE BANK EMPLOYEES DEMAND HIGHER WAGES:** Workers from Branches of the Tamilnadu Primary co-operative Bank demonstrated at Tirunelveli and in Thoothukudi, Tenkashi and Kanyakumari districts on March 11th to demand a wage increase. The current wage of newly employed workers in a meagre Rs.6250/- a month, other demands were transparency in the promotion and recruitment processes and no forced transfer to distant location on these low wages. There are close to 30000 workers from 4500 branches of co-operative Banks across the state.
- ▶ **STRIKING MRF TYRE FACTORY WORKERS OCCUPY THEIR FACTORY IN PONDICHERRY:** MRF tyre factory workers in Pondicherry downed tools and held a sit-in protest on March 11th to demand an increase in retirement age to 60 years. There are MRF tyre plants in Chennai at Arakkonam and Thiruvottiyur. Present age of retirement is 58 years.
- ▶ **MUNICIPAL SANITATION WORKERS AT BHUBANESHWAR, ORISSA END STRIKE:** Sanitation workers from the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation in Orissa state called off their 3 days strike on 13th March after Corporation Mayor gave assurances concerning their demands workers want their monthly wage increased to Rs.15000/- and appointment of separate persons for waste segregation workers said they would resume their strike if the Assurances were not fulfilled in 3 days.
- ▶ **PUNJAB CONTRACT TEACHERS DEMAND PERMANENT JOBS:** Special teachers who are members of the sarva shiksha Abhiyaan and mid-day-meal workers union, protested outside the deputy commissioner's office in Jalandhar on 12th March. Workers said they were previously given assurances from the government that have not been fulfilled. The contract workers major demand was for permanent government jobs. Workers said they would March to the Chief Minister Residence if their demands were not met.
- ▶ **KOCHI FISHERMEN PROTEST NEW HARBOUR TOLL:** Fishermen at Kochi, major port city in Kerala state began hunger strike protest on March 11th over CHELLANAM MINI Fishing Harbour's decision to impose a toll. They said the toll added to the already extreme burden facing fishers who were facing severe fish shortages and the rising cost of fishing operations.
- ▶ **PUNJAB ROAD CORPORATION TRANSPORT WORKERS PROTEST LOW PAY:** Contract workers employed by the Punjab Road Transport Corporation (PRTC) held a protest march on 11th March 2024 Near Deputy commissioners' office to demand a salary revision. Bus services were

suspended during the protest. Despite written assurances from the government to address their demands, Management has consistently obstructed implementation of the necessary changes. The workers claimed that over the past 5 years salaries had decreased by approximately 5% and instead of forming a committee to resolve these issues they were being dismissed from their jobs.

- ▶ **TAMILNADU POWER UTILITY WORKERS PROTEST PRIVATISATION:** Members of the Central organisation of Tamil Nadu Electricity Employees and Tamil Nadu retired Electricity Board Employees Association demonstrated in Madurai on 11th March to protest move to split the Corporation into 3 entities. Workers argued that such move would lead to the privatisation of the Corporation, Jeopardising workers Right protesters also complained above planned job cuts of key personnel at substations.
- ▶ **MAHARASHTRA POWER UTILITY WORKERS STRIKE FOR PAY INCREASE:** Over 20000 contract workers from the Mahagenco, Mahatransco and MSEDCL power utilities went on strike to demand a wage rise and job security. Members of the Maharashtra state power contract workers joint action committee want a 30% pay rise back dated to April 1st 2023, Job assurance until retirement and Annual Health Insurance for workers and their families for for 15 lakhs.
- ▶ **ALMOND FACTORY PROCESSING WORKERS IN DELHI STRIKE FOR LEGITIMATE RIGHTS:** Almond processing workers from factories at Karawalnagar in Northern Delhi have been on strike since March 1st over low wages and poor work conditions.
- ▶ **UTTARAKHAND ANGANWADI WORKERS PROTEST IN DELHI FOR HIGHER WAGES AND PENSIONS:** As part of ongoing Nation-wide protests, Anganwadi child care workers from Uttarakhand state protested in Delhi on March 4th alongside Anganwadi workers from various states demanding higher wages and retirement Benefits.
- ▶ **ANDRAPRADESH BANK WORKERS DEMAND AN END TO JOB OUTSOURCING:** Bank employees of India (BEFI) members demonstrated at Dharna Chowk in Vijayawada on March 2nd 2024 to Demand a Recruitment and an end to the outsourcing of jobs.
- ▶ **MUMBAI MUNICIPAL SANITATION WORKERS PROTEST MASS JOB LOSSES:** Sanitation workers from Grand Mumbai Municipal Corporation employed under the Swachh Mumbai Prabodhan Abhiyan (Slum Waste Management program) demonstrated outside the Corporation building on 6th March in opposition to the contracting of work to private company. ●

## ECONOMIC TID BITDS

● J. SURESH, Mysore

- In March 2024, Mexico had 14 billionaires in the Forbes list with a wealth of \$184 billion. In 2018, these individuals had a combined wealth of \$125 billion. This represents a 47% increase in their wealth in just six years. The wealth of the richest Mexican, Carlos Slim, has increased by 50% in the same period, from \$67 to \$ 102 billion. According to Oxfam, the wealth owned by 14 Mexican billionaires represents 8% of the total wealth of the country. This is nearly double the wealth of the poorest 50% of the Mexican population. During Covid pandemic, the wealth of the two top billionaires has grown by 70% and are equivalent to the wealth of the poorest 50% of the entire population of Latin America or 334 million people.
- According to ICRA rating agency, Indian IT Sector's revenue is expected to come at a tepid 3.5% in financial year 2025. The sector's hiring will "remain muted" according to the agency. However, the companies profitability is expected to be resilient amid concerns on top line growth, it said, adding the operating profit margins will come at a healthy 21-22% in financial year 2025. The agency said in the first nine months of 2023-24, the industry has posted a revenue growth of just 2%, as against estimated 3.5%. The top line growth for the first nine months of financial year 2023 had stood at 9.2%. While it expects hiring activity to remain muted, the agency said the attrition levels will stabilize over the near future, including closer to the long term average of 12-13%, as overall slowdown in growth momentum and strong hiring in the previous fiscal has corrected the demand supply mismatch.
- According to a report by the Congressional Budget Office on the soaring US government debt has raised questions as to how long the dollar can continue to function as a stable base for the global monetary system. The explosive growth of the US public debt was highlighted in the CBO report issued earlier this month which forecast it would grow by almost two thirds, from \$1.6trillion to \$2.6 trillion over the next ten years. The CBO said interest payments on debt would account for around three quarters of the rise in the deficit over the next decade, taking it from 5.6% of GDP in

2024, to 6.1% of GDP in 2034, well above the average 3.7% over the past 50 years. The widening debt has already had an effect as seen in the decision last August by the credit rating agent Fitch to remove its triple A rating from the US because its debt to GDP ratio exceeded that of other countries afforded the top rating.

- According to a report jointly authored by Americans for Tax Fairness (ATF) and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), two liberal think tanks, 64 leading US corporations that paid out less in federal taxes than in total compensation for their top five officers in at least two of those years between 2018 and 2022. Another 35 Corporations whose cumulative tax bills were less than their compensation packages for their highest ranking officers over the entire five years span. Among the 35 Corporations that cumulatively paid no taxes, total compensation reported for the top five executive officers over the five year period was \$9.5billion. This means that the average annual pay for the 175 executives was \$10.9 million. Over the entire five year span, these Corporations combined actually paid less than zero in federal taxes, because they received \$1.8 billion in net tax refunds. Of the 64 companies in the study, 18 paid no federal income taxes. In fact all but one of these 18 companies received tax refunds from government. They gave their top executives a combined \$5.3 billion in pay packages, yielding an average annual pay of \$10.8 million. In 1965, corporate taxes made up 21.8% of all federal revenues and average CEO to Median worker pay was 21 to 1 by 2022, corporate tax receipts had fallen to only 8.7% of the federal revenue, and the average pay ratio had risen to 344 to 1.
- According to a report by German Bundesbank, the German economy was likely to shrink in the first quarter of this year following a decline in output in the last quarter of 2023. Last year the German economy contracted by 0.3% making it the worst performing of the entire major economies. Malaysian economy had contracted 2.1% in the final quarter compared to previous three months. Growth in China last year was 5.2%, the lowest in three decades.

## FOR OUR FIELD FORCE

● **A. ARIVUKKADAL**  
Thanjavur

**Business Growth:** For February 2024, it is LIC that has led the growth in new business premiums (NBP), largely led by aggressive selling by its feet-on-street force (individual agents). The private insurers saw NBP expand by 27.80% in terms of first year premium collections in February 2024 while LIC saw first year premium collections expand by a whopping 67.48% yoy. LIC's group premium doubled to Rs.14,914.98 crore for February 2024 from Rs.7,434.27 crore. The non-life insurance industry has witnessed a 13.1% growth in premiums in the first 11 months of FY24. Health insurance premiums have grown by 20.39% year-on-year (Y-o-Y) during the April 2023-February 2024 period, while motor insurance premiums have gone up by 13.60%.

✱  
**Tax refund:** LIC has received Rs.21,740 crore in refund from the Income Tax Department. The total amount of refund was Rs.25,464.46 crore. LIC received refund orders for Assessment Years 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, and out of the total, a refund of Rs.3,700 crore still awaited.

✱  
**LIC Dividend:** LIC has paid a dividend of Rs.2,441 crore to the government. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman received the dividend cheque from LIC Chairman Siddhartha Mohanty.

✱  
**Claim Settlement:** IRDAI has recently released the details of claim settlements of all life insurance companies for the year 2022-23. The individual death claim settlement ratio of the life insurance industry was 98.45% in 2022-23. LIC's settlement ratio is 98.52%. LIC alone settled over 9.22 lakh claims during 2022-23. Meanwhile, the private insurance sector paid 1.54 lakh claims during the same period.

✱  
**Unclaimed funds:** The unclaimed funds within the life insurance sector are higher from policies sold by agents as against other channels like bancassurance or a digital platform, said analysts and officials from insurance companies. The insurance companies can easily verify the bank details with the bank for bancassurance customers and also get new bank account, contact details and address from the bank based on Permanent Account Number (PAN) numbers.

✱  
**Unclaimed funds responsibility:** IRDAI has amended the Master Circular on Unclaimed Amounts of Policyholders due to a rise in unclaimed amounts with the insurers raising regulatory concerns. It asked the insurers to hold responsible the corresponding agents, middlemen, group master policyholders, and other channels of distribution engaged in the request for customer tracking and update the contact information, bank account information, etc. It also asks the insurers to advertise in Print and Digital media to reach out to

consumers who are not traceable.

✱  
**Uniform KYC:** In the meeting of Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the FSDC has decided to prescribe norms for uniform KYC. The government will also explore introduction of inter-usability of KYC records across the financial sectors. This means that bank KYC will be enough to invest in financial products

like mutual funds and insurance. In addition, FSDC will formulate a strategy to simplify the existing KYC norms and introduce complete digitalization of KYC process.

✱  
**Bank fined:** The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Ludhiana (Punjab) bench held Canara Bank liable for deficiency in services for failure to inform the Complainant about the discontinuation of his insurance policy from Apollo Munich Health Insurance Company Ltd. The bench directed Canara Bank to pay a compensation of Rs.10,000 to the Complainant.

✱  
**Policyholder protection:** IRDAI has proposed to increase the free look (cooling off) period after completion of the policy to 30 days from the current 15 days, in its draft guidelines for the Protection of interest of Policyholders. It has also proposed that the insurer must gather the insured's bank account information during the proposal stage, in order to facilitate electronic transmission of refunds and payment of claims.

✱  
**Surrender charges:** Long-term products such as PPF (public provident fund) with a 15-year tenure, withdrawal and premature closure are only allowed after five years. Long-term products including life insurance have different objectives rather than providing liquidity. So the life insurers are engaging with the regulator to understand and increase in surrender charges.

✱  
**Medical inflation:** The average ticket size of retail health insurance in India has increased to Rs.26,533 so far in FY24, up 48.22% from Rs.17,900 in FY19. The jump in average ticket size is because of medical inflation in the country which is about 14% to 15% and the health insurers follow suit by increasing the premiums for health insurance policies.

✱  
**Fraud claims:** In India, only 80% of insurance claims are genuine, and fraud claims make up 15% which in a year makes about Rs.900 crore, according to Code F Solutions Private Limited, Nagpur. In total, every year, 10 lakh fraudulent claims have been submitted in India. However, only 1% has been investigated. ●



## BDIEU VICE PRESIDENT TEJ KUMAR TIGAA

Comrade TEJ KUMAR TIGAA, VICE PRESIDENT BDIEU retired on 29th FEBRUARY, 2024 after completing 35 years service in LIC. A post graduate in commerce, Com Tigga has also worked as treasurer of BDIEU.

A very humble person, and staunch trade union leader, Comrade Tigga also shoulders his responsibilities in CITU Bhopal District. He played an active role to strengthen AIIEA. He participated in almost all AIIEA and CZIEA Conferences.



Comrades of fraternal trade union were also present on the occasion of his farewell. Com. Pushan Bhattacharya, CZIEA, JOINT SECRETARY, PRESIDENT, BDIEU, GENERAL SECRETARY BDIEU was also present. BDIEU wishes him a healthy, active & purposeful life. Comrade Tigga in his farewell speech committed to continue to work for the working class movement.



### LIC RANKS HIGH IN BW REAL 500 LIST

LIC is the finest financial institution in the country. It is ranked third amongst top 15 companies listed by Business World in the BW Real 500 list. LIC is the only insurance company in the list. Despite facing intense competition from 27 private companies, LIC continues its market dominance. It enjoys immense faith of the insuring public. The devotion and commitment of its administrative and field force has made LIC a great public sector enterprise.

## FALI NARIMAN



Fali Nariman, the outstanding jurist passed away on 21st February 2024. He played an important role in several landmark judgements of the Supreme Court. He was an authority on Indian Constitution and strove hard to make justice accessible to the common man. In his death, India lost one of the most outstanding and outspoken legal luminaries. Insurance Worker pays its respectful homage.

### DONATIONS

**Com. D.Suresh**  
City Branch, Bangalore 10000

**Com. M.R.Rajalakshmi,**  
Retd. Mysore 50000

Insurance Worker appreciates their kind gesture and thanks them for this valuable contribution.

### CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

Month	Base2016	2001	1960
June 2023	136.4	392.83	8966.74
July	139.7	402.34	9183.68
Aug	139.2	400.90	9150.81
Sept	137.5	396.00	9039.06
Oct	138.4	398.59	9098.22
Nov	139.1	400.61	9144.24
December	138.8	399.74	9124.52
Jan 2024	138.9	400.03	9131.09

Base 1960=Base 2001x22.8259 Base 2001=Base 2016x2.88

**Thank you**

## **AIIEA**

**for this Glorious Wage Revision**

**Our focused dedication has transformed**

**Aspirations into Achievements**

**Goals into Triumphs and**

**Visions into Reality.**

**In the tapestry of our success,**

**our dedication weaves the most vibrant threads**

**and In the symphony of our achievements,**

**our tireless efforts play a melody of dedication**

**and determination.**

**SZIEF expresses its gratitude, always remembers that  
the highest appreciation is not to utter words but live by  
them.**

**Long Live AIIEA!!!**



**SOUTH ZONE INSURANCE  
EMPLOYEES' FEDERATION**

*With Best Wishes ....*



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**Regd. No. 3314, Estd : 1953**  
[www.licempcoopbank.com](http://www.licempcoopbank.com)

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**V. JYOTHILAKSHMI**  
**SECRETARY**

**HARSHA B WALSALOM**  
**CHAIRMAN**