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The Precariat Class
in the Neo Liberal Era



ROAD AHEAD



LESSONS FROM SBI



NEO-LIBERALISM
& INEQUALITY



भारतीय संविधान
और जनान्दोलन



SILENCE IN GREY



missing

Political Morality &
Public Accountability





NO!

TO

**STRATEGIC SALE -
PRIVATISATION -
DISINVESTMENT -
MONETIZATION**

**IN THE NATIONAL
INTERESTS**

**SAVE PUBLIC SECTOR
SAVE NATION'S ASSETS**



**South Zone Insurance
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MISSING POLITICAL MORALITY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Lal Bahadur Shastri as the Railway Minister in Nehru's Cabinet resigned twice owning moral responsibility for train accidents that claimed several lives. Nehru could persuade Shastriji not to insist on resigning on the first occasion. However on the second occasion, he could not succeed and Shastriji resigned from the Cabinet. He thus set a very high standard in political morality and public accountability. This action made Shastriji one of the most respected politicians of Independent India. But India has moved far away from those days of political idealism. Politics has degenerated. Constitutional loyalty, political morality and public accountability no longer have any meaning in blind pursuit for power. This is evident when Shastriji's son who is a Minister in UP government is tasked to defend Ajay Kumar Mishra, Minister of State for Home Affairs in the Union Cabinet and his son of actions that are totally indefensible.

The Minister has not denied that the Car that rammed into the farmers peaceful protest in Lakhimpur Kheri belongs to him. It is alleged that the Minister's son was in the car involved in the crime and is also accused of firing to kill. This brutal incident claimed the lives of four farmers, a journalist and three BJP members in the violence that followed. It was expected that the Minister to whom the law and order machinery reports would resign to enable a fair investigation. But that was not to be. The government as in the past and with liberal help of corporate media made all efforts to brazen out the issue. The theories of conspiracies and the alleged presence of anti-nationals and khalistanis were given as the reason for the incident. The police who registered an FIR under Section 302 in which the Minister's son was named handled the entire issue with kid gloves. For more than two days the accused in the FIR were not even questioned. It was only after the Supreme Court intervened and made strong comments that the UP administration moved into action and the Minister's son was called for questioning and finally arrested. The Supreme Court comments on CBI, a premier investigating agency is a sad commentary as to how the law enforcing agencies and democratic institutions are crawling to pledge loyalty to the government in power rather

than displaying their allegiance to the Constitution. Lakhimpur brutality was no ordinary incident. It was a message delivered with all vengeance and barbarity in feudal style. Message was loud and clear: Fall in line or else..

There is no doubt that the environment for such a situation was being created much earlier. The Minister Ajay Mishra just days earlier had warned the farmers that they would be taught a lesson and even threatened them of eviction from their lands. It was a clear case of incitement to violence. The threat coming from a Minister in the Union Cabinet who took oath to defend the Constitution was no ordinary thing. But nothing surprises these days. Days earlier, the Chief Minister of Haryana had asked his supporters to pick up lathis and set right the farmers. The dance of death on a person lying immobile and dying in Assam that shocked the entire world was the result of the divisive policies of Himanta Biswas Sarma. In any mature democracy these worthies would have been sacked without any loss of time.

In these circumstances, it was hoped that the Prime Minister who shows exemplary speed in tweeting, will speak and bring some sanity into his followers. But that was too much to expect. He maintained a stoic silence and did not even offer condolences on the loss of lives in Lakhimpur. On the other hand he has warned that Human Rights activists are bringing a bad name to India and harming democracy. He criticized the selective outrage of these activists. But then, it is an irrefutable fact that the Prime Minister himself is selective and it is not necessary to enumerate events on which he chose to remain silent.

These are troubling times for Indian democracy and its rich diverse society of which we are proud. However, India is slipping on very many parameters of democracy. The fundamental requisite of any democracy is to consider every citizen as equal. This exactly is what our Constitution says without any ambiguity. But today this basic requisite of democracy is being ruthlessly undermined. Uniting the nation at a time when it is facing enormous problems has become the urgent necessity. Large sections of our people are undergoing tremendous economic hardships. The country is witnessing massive income and wealth inequalities. Heavy reliance on raising revenues through indirect taxes is hurting the poor and other vulnerable sections of

the population. Rather than finding real solutions to these problems, the government is on a massive image building exercise. Free vaccination and free ration are advertised as doles from a benevolent ruler and in the process the reality of the daily existence of life in India is being brushed under the carpet.

And the reality is this: India has further slipped in the global hunger index. It ranks a pathetic 101 out of 116 countries indicating that India has a level of hunger that is serious. The government has criticized this report as baseless but the very fact that the Prime Minister takes pride in supply of free ration to 80 crore Indians indicate the magnitude of the problem. The government cannot claim pride in free supply of ration as Right to Food is a fundamental right read with the Right to Life. 80 crore Indians depending on the ration supplied by the government is a serious concern while the country is experiencing massive growth in the number of its dollar billionaires. Such lopsided development certainly is unsustainable.

In the past few weeks, we have also seen increasing terror activities and the targeted killing of minorities in Kashmir. This belies the claim of the government that "All's Well" in Kashmir. Fortunately all political parties and civil society have condemned these brutal killings. The ordinary Kashmiris find a democratic-deficit in the actions of the government. The need, therefore, is to start a political process involving all stakeholders.

If Indian democracy, which the Prime Minister described as Mother of All Democracies has to survive, the path of sectarian politics for electoral gains must be abandoned. The State must play an active role in the economy and take decisive steps to reduce ever widening income and wealth inequalities. Such increasing inequalities and pursuance of sectarian politics are bound to inflame social conflicts. This is harmful for the nation. The Prime Minister rightly claimed that he considers Constitution as the only holy book. The government that he leads should practice to uphold the constitutional values and constitutional morality. To put this into action the Prime Minister must take all necessary steps to ensure justice to the victims of Lakhimpur Violence. As the first step, he should sack the Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Kumar Mishra.



गुम होती राजनीतिक नैतिकता और सार्वजनिक जवाबदेही

नेहरू के मंत्रिमण्डल में रेल मंत्री के रूप में लाल बहादुर शास्त्री ने रेल दुर्घटनाओं के लिए जिसमें कई लोगों की जान चली गई थी, नैतिक जिम्मेदारी लेते हुए दो बार इस्तीफा दिया था। नेहरू शास्त्रीजी को पहली बार के इस्तीफे पर जोर न देने के लिए मना सके थे। हालांकि दूसरे मौके पर वे सफल नहीं हो सके और शास्त्रीजी ने मंत्रिमण्डल से इस्तीफा दे दिया। इस प्रकार उन्होंने राजनीतिक नैतिकता और सार्वजनिक जवाबदेही का एक बहुत ही उच्च मानक स्थापित किया। इस कार्यवाही ने शास्त्रीजी को स्वतन्त्र भारत के सबसे सम्मानित राजनेताओं में से एक बना दिया। लेकिन भारत राजनीतिक आदर्शवाद के उन दिनों से बहुत दूर निकल आया है। राजनीति का पतन हो गया है। सत्ता की अन्धी चाहत में संवैधानिक निष्ठा, राजनीतिक नैतिकता और सार्वजनिक जवाबदेही का अब कोई मतलब नहीं रह गया है। यह तब और भी जाहिर हो जाता है जब शास्त्रीजी के पुत्र, जो यूपी सरकार में मंत्री हैं, को केन्द्रीय मन्त्रिमण्डल में गृह राज्य मंत्री अजय कुमार मिश्रा और उनके बेटे के कृत्यों का बचाव करने का काम सौंपा जाता है, जो पूरी तरह से अक्षम्य हैं।

मन्त्री ने इस बात से इन्कार नहीं किया है कि लखीमपुर खीरी में शान्तिपूर्ण विरोध कर रहे किसानों को कुचलने वाली कार उन्हीं की है। आरोप है कि जिस कार के द्वारा वारदात को अन्जाम दिया गया उसमें मन्त्री का बेटा मौजूद था और उस पर जान से मारने के लिए फायरिंग करने का भी आरोप है। इस घटना ने चार किसानों, एक पत्रकार और उसके बाद हुई हिंसा में तीन भाजपा सदस्यों की जान ले ली। यह उम्मीद की गई थी कि जिस मन्त्री के निर्देशन में कानून और व्यवस्था के संचालक काम करते हैं वह निष्पक्ष जांच के लिए इस्तीफा दे देगा। लेकिन ऐसा होना नहीं था। सरकार पूर्व की भांति कॉरपोरेट मीडिया की उदार मदद से इसे मुद्दा न बनने देने का पूरी निर्लज्जता के साथ प्रयास करती रही। साजिश के सिद्धान्तों तथा देशद्रोहियों और खालिस्तानियों की कथित उपस्थिति को घटना का कारण बताया गया। पुलिस द्वारा धारा 302 के तहत जो एफआईआर दर्ज की गई जिसमें मन्त्री के बेटे को नामजद किया गया था, उस पूरे मामले को बड़ी चतुरता के साथ संयोजित किया गया। दो दिन से अधिक समय तक एफआईआर में शामिल आरोपियों से पूछताछ तक नहीं की गई। सुप्रीम कोर्ट के हस्तक्षेप और कड़ी टिप्पणी करने के बाद ही यूपी प्रशासन हरकत में आया और मन्त्री के बेटे को पूछताछ के लिए बुलाया गया और आखिरकार गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया। एक प्रमुख जांच एजेन्सी सीबीआई पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट की टिप्पणी एक दुखद व्याख्या है कि कैसे कानून लागू करने वाली एजेन्सियां और लोकतान्त्रिक संस्थान संविधान के प्रति अपनी निष्ठा प्रदर्शित करने के बजाये सत्ता में सरकार के प्रति वफादारी की प्रतिज्ञा प्रदर्शित करने के लिए घुटनों के बल रेंग रहे हैं। लखीमपुर की बर्बरता कोई साधारण घटना नहीं थी। यह तमाम प्रतिशोध और बर्बरता के

साथ सामन्ती शैली में दिया गया संदेश था। संदेश घोर उग्र और स्पष्ट था: हमारे रास्ते चलो वरना.....

इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि ऐसी स्थिति के लिए माहौल बहुत पहले से बनाया जा रहा था। मन्त्री अजय मिश्रा ने कुछ दिन पहले ही किसानों को चेतावनी दी थी कि उन्हें सबक सिखाया जाएगा और यहां तक कि उन्हें उनकी जमीन से ही बेदखल करने की धमकी भी दी गई थी। यह हिंसा के लिए उकसाने का एक स्पष्ट मामला था। संविधान की रक्षा के लिए शपथ लेने वाले केन्द्रीय मंत्रिमण्डल के एक मन्त्री से आने वाली यह धमकी कोई सामान्य बात नहीं थी। लेकिन इन दिनों कुछ भी हैरान नहीं करता है। कुछ दिन पहले हरियाणा के मुख्यमन्त्री ने अपने समर्थकों से लाठी उठाकर किसानों को ठीक करने को कहा था। असम में मरणासन्न निर्जीव पड़े व्यक्ति की देह पर मौत का नाच, जिसने पूरी दुनिया को झकझोर कर रख दिया, हिमंत बिस्वास सरमा की विभाजनकारी नीतियों का परिणाम था। किसी भी परिपक्व लोकतन्त्र में इस तरह कि विलक्षणताओं को बिना समय गंवाए बर्खास्त कर दिया जाता।

इन परिस्थितियों में उम्मीद की जा रही थी कि ट्वीट करने में अनुकरणीय गति दिखाने वाले प्रधानमन्त्री बोलेंगे और अपने अनुयायियों में कुछ विवेक जगाएंगे। लेकिन यह उम्मीद करना बहुत ज्यादा था। उन्होंने भावहीन चुप्पी साधे रखी और लखीमपुर में लोगों की मौत पर शोक भी नहीं जताया। दूसरी ओर उन्होंने चेतावनी दी है कि मानवाधिकार कार्यकर्ता भारत का नाम खराब कर रहे हैं और लोकतन्त्र को नुकसान पहुंचा रहे हैं। उन्होंने इन कार्यकर्ताओं के चुनिंदा आक्रोश की आलोचना की। लेकिन फिर; यह एक अकाव्य तथ्य है ही कि प्रधानमंत्री स्वयं चयनात्मक हैं और ऐसी घटनाओं की गणना करना आवश्यक नहीं है जिन पर उन्होंने चुप रहना चुना।

भारतीय लोकतन्त्र और इसके समृद्ध मिले-जुले समाज जिस पर हमें गर्व है, उसके लिए यह परेशान करने वाला समय है। हालांकि, भारत लोकतन्त्र के बहुत से मापदण्डों पर फिसल रहा है। किसी भी लोकतन्त्र की मूलभूत आवश्यकता प्रत्येक नागरिक को समान समझना है। हमारा संविधान बिना किसी अस्पष्टता के ठीक यही कहता है। लेकिन आज लोकतन्त्र के इस बुनियादी मापदण्ड को बेरहमी से नजरअन्दाज किया जा रहा है। जब राष्ट्र भारी समस्याओं का सामना कर रहा है, ऐसे समय में राष्ट्र को एकजुट करना तत्काल आवश्यकता बन गई है। हमारे लोगों का एक बड़ा वर्ग जबरदस्त आर्थिक कठिनाईयों से गुजर रहा है। देश आय और सम्पत्ति में भारी असमानताओं का गवाह बन रहा है। अप्रत्यक्ष करों के माध्यम से राजस्व बढ़ाने पर भारी निर्भरता गरीब और आबादी के अन्य कमजोर वर्गों को नुकसान पहुंचा रही है। इन समस्याओं का वास्तविक समाधान खोजने के बजाये, सरकार बड़े पैमाने पर छवि निर्माण की कवायद कर रही है। निःशुल्क टीकाकरण

और मुफ्त राशन का विज्ञापन एक उदार शासक द्वारा दान के रूप में किया जाता है और इस प्रक्रिया में भारत में जीवन के दैनिक अस्तित्व की वास्तविकता को ढक दिया जाता है।

और हकीकत यह है: भारत वैश्विक भूख सूचकांक में और फिसल गया है। यह 116 देशों में से 101वें स्थान पर है, जो दर्शाता है कि भारत में भूख का स्तर गम्भीर है। सरकार ने इस रिपोर्ट को निराधार बताते हुए आलोचना की है, लेकिन यह तथ्य कि प्रधानमंत्री 80 करोड़ भारतीयों को मुफ्त राशन की आपूर्ति में गर्व महसूस करते हैं, समस्या की भयावहता का संकेत है। सरकार राशन की मुफ्त आपूर्ति में गर्व का दावा नहीं कर सकती क्योंकि भोजन का अधिकार जीवन के अधिकार के साथ पढा जाने वाला एक मौलिक अधिकार है। सरकार द्वारा आपूर्ति किए जाने वाले राशन पर निर्भर 80 करोड़ भारतीय एक गम्भीर चिन्ता का विषय है, जबकि देश डॉलर अरबपतियों की संख्या में भारी वृद्धि होते हुए देख रहा है। इस तरह का एकतरफा विकास निश्चित रूप से टिकाऊ नहीं है।

पिछले कुछ हफ्तों में, हमने कश्मीर में बढ़ती आतंकी गतिविधियों और अल्पसंख्यकों की लक्षित हत्याओं को भी देखा है। यह सरकार के इस दावे को झुठलाता है कि कश्मीर में "सब ठीक है"। सौभाग्य से सभी राजनीतिक दलों और

नागरिक समाज ने इन नृशंस हत्याओं की निन्दा की है। आम कश्मीरी सरकार की कार्यवाहियों में एक लोकतान्त्रिक कमी पाते हैं। इसलिए, सभी हितधारकों को शामिल करते हुए एक राजनीतिक प्रक्रिया शुरू करने की आवश्यकता है।

भारतीय लोकतन्त्र, जिसे प्रधानमंत्री ने सभी लोकतन्त्रों की जननी के रूप में वर्णित किया है, को यदि जीवित रहना है तो चुनावी लाभ के लिए सांप्रदायिक राजनीति का रास्ता छोड़ना होगा। राज्य को अर्थव्यवस्था में सक्रिय भूमिका निभानी चाहिए और लगातार बढ़ती आय और धन असमानताओं को कम करने के लिए निर्णायक कदम उठाने चाहिए। इस तरह की बढ़ती असमानता और साम्प्रदायिक राजनीति का अनुसरण सामाजिक संघर्षों को भड़काने वाला होता है। यह राष्ट्र के लिए हानिकारक है। प्रधानमंत्री ने ठीक ही दावा किया कि वह संविधान को एकमात्र पवित्र ग्रन्थ मानते हैं। वह जिस सरकार का नेतृत्व करते हैं, उसे संवैधानिक मूल्यों और संवैधानिक नैतिकता को बनाये रखने के लिए अभ्यास करना चाहिए। इसे अमल में लाने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री को लखीमपुर हिंसा के पीड़ितों को न्याय सुनिश्चित करने के लिए सभी आवश्यक कदम उठाने चाहिए। पहले कदम के तौर पर उन्हें गृह राज्य मंत्री अजय कुमार मिश्रा को बर्खास्त कर देना चाहिए।



KAMALA BHASIN

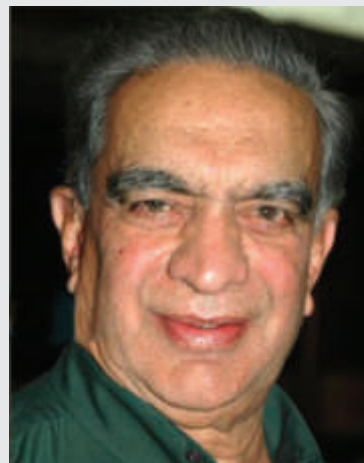
Kamala Bhasin, a very prominent women rights activist, feminist, poet and a great communicator passed away at Delhi on September 25, 2021 at the age of 75. She has left a deep impression on the feminist movement in India. She resigned from her job in the United Nations in 2002 to work with Sangat, a feminist organization of which she was a founder member.

Insurance Worker offer heartfelt condolences and shares the grief with her family, friends and admirers.

PROF G.K.GOVINDA RAO

Prof. G.K.Govind Rao, a very popular theatre personality and film actor of Karnataka passed away on October 15, 2021 at Hubballi at the age of 86. Prof Govind Rao was also an eminent writer and social activist. He was connected with various progressive movements and agitations for the cause of people. He had worked as a Professor of English in St. Joseph's College of Commerce for over 2 decades. Prof Govind Rao was closely connected with the movement of insurance employees and he participated in various programs of AIIEA conducted against privatization.

Insurance Worker pays homage to his memory and shares the grief with the bereaved family and his innumerable friends.



Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions & Independant Federations CONDEMN SALE OF AIR INDIA

PRESS STATEMENT OF 13/10/2021

The joint platform of the Central Trade Unions, independent federations and associations deplore the sale of Air India, the only air carrier with the Govt. for too less an amount than what has gone into building it up for decades into making it a giant carrier.

This is a gift back to Tata on 75th years of independence after its takeover by Govt. in 1948 followed by its nationalisation in 1953.

Several lakhs crores was infused from national exchequer to expand its asset base, huge fleet of aircrafts and properties, both in the country and abroad. Only in 2009-10, Rs 1,10,000 crore was infused in Air India by Govt. comprising of Rs 58000 crore cash support and rest through Govt. guarantee on credit.

Now the sale-deal with Tata envisages that Govt. will absorb Rs 46,262 crore of the Rs 67,000 crore debt burden of Air India but the assets created by such debt will be handed over to Tata in lieu of only Rs 18,000 crore.

This is virtually a free gift of the National Career to Tata and demonstrated worst ever perverted economic deal for frittering away national asset in favour of their corporate masters. Now the government has moved ahead for selling the four subsidiaries also.

The Trade Unions had opposed the merger of Indian Airlines with Air India with Government making hollow claims that it would help in mitigating losses and lead to recovery of the Airlines. The contention of unions was that it would not help in

recovery as claimed, rather would be allowed to incur more losses and add debts to it, to pave the way for its sale.

The government is silent about how it's own policies of handing over profitable routes to their cronies, buying a huge fleet of aircraft when not needed, brought the air carrier to this pass. The truth is before us. India will be perhaps among the few countries, where Govt. will not own its air carrier.

Those serving would be adversely affected as the workers are given protection for one year only. Large number of employees are in the age group of 40-55 years which renders them ineligible for jobs in other companies.

The fall out is not only the assets created over decades with public money being sold out cheap but it would be harming the public interest as well.

Let us remember that it was Air India which made 440 flights to lift one lac Indians back home during Gulf war.

It is this carrier which brought Indian citizens home stranded abroad in precarious situations due to Covid-19.

It is Air India which was used in helping people in natural disasters like earth quakes, heavy floods, avalanches in hill areas etc.

It is not only the disastrous policies of the Government for every asset which is in public sector to be sold but is a policy which goes against people's interest and is anti- national.

The Trade unions committed to the cause of working people and the common masses would intensify their resistance in national interest.

Impact of Privatisation - Air India Employees asked to vacate colony houses

The immediate consequence of the privatisation of Air India has been felt by its employees staying in Air India colonies. They will soon be homeless as they have been asked to vacate colony houses within 6 months of the takeover of Air India by Tata group.

These workers do not have a house in Mumbai and would have stayed in the colony till their retirement if Air India had not been privatised. They have been asked to give an undertaking by 20 October 2021 that they would vacate the house by the particular

date. They have been warned of a fine of up to Rs. 15 lakh and disciplinary action, if they fail to vacate.

Nearly 7000 employees living in the colony at Santacruz, Mumbai which is spread over 184 acres of land, are protesting against the unjust move of the government. They allege that the Adani group, which has recently taken over the Mumbai airport, wants to take over this precious land, located in the heart of Mumbai city. This is the reason for employees being asked to vacate their houses. Employees staying in

the colony are not paid any House Rent Allowance. Asking them to vacate their house amounts to change in their service condition which is illegal.

The Joint Action Committee of Air India Unions has asked the Air India management to withdraw the notice asking for undertakings to vacate and to allow employees to stay on in the colony till their retirement. Employees have resolved to go on strike from 2 November if their request is not acceded to.



AIIPA writes to Finance Minister on Family Pension

The AIIPA has addressed a letter to Union Minister of Finance on 27th September 2021 on the issues of improvements in pension scheme including family pension. The letter is self explanatory.

“This refers to the representations from the Pensioners’ Associations of Banks, LIC & PSGIC on the above subject.

We are happy to note that you have been expressing concern over the pathetic condition of Pensioners in financial sector, especially the Family Pensioners, whose minimum pension has long been pegged at a paltry low of 15% of last drawn salary of the deceased employee / Pensioner. Whatever minimum savings the widows have is also getting diminishing returns with the falling interest rates.

As declared and assured by you in many forums, the minimum family pension in Banks has since been enhanced from 15 to 30%.

We note, the recommendation of LIC board to enhance the minimum family pension to their

family pensioners from the existing 15% to 30% is in advanced stage of approval in DFS.

You will please appreciate, this demand for improvement in minimum family pension to 30% is long pending in PSGICs and it was agreed that such a gesture would not be seen as a ‘liability’ but a ‘responsibility’ of the PSU employer despite some temporary financial constraints that has passed over. Accordingly, the management had agreed to amortise the outgo and place their recommendations to DFS.

Now that the issue is settled in Banks and is in advanced stage of approval for LIC, we request you to get it approved for PSGIC pensioners as well. We are sure the condition of Family Pensioners of PSGICs will not be ignored and they will not be left in lurch.

We shall thank you for an early action.”

SIMILAR LETTERS HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE CHAIRMAN GIPSA AND ALL HEADS OF THE PSGI COMPANIES.

AIIPA General Conference at Bangalore

The 8th General Conference of All India Insurance Pensioners’ Association will be held at Bangalore on 29th and 30th January 2022. The Conference originally had been scheduled for October 2020 but had to be postponed due to the extremely precarious covid conditions.

Taking into consideration the Covid related restrictions, the Central Committee of AIIPA that met virtually on 25th September 2021 decided to reduce the duration of the Conference from the normal three days to two days this time. It was also decided to restrict the participation in the conference to 50% of the eligible number of delegates.

The hosts, Insurance Corporation Pensioners’ Association have already begun making necessary arrangements for the success of the conference. It is worth mentioning that the Foundation Conference of AIIPA too was held at Bangalore in March 1997.

Central Trade Unions and Independent Federations write to Prime Minister to Roll back the Policy of Selling National Assets

Ten central trade unions, INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, LPF and UTUC and Sectoral Independent Federations/Associations have written to the Prime Minister on 19th October as follows:

Dear Shri Modi ji,

On October 8, your Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey announced at a press conference that the Tata Sons subsidiary, Talace Pvt. Ltd., had won the bid for the national carrier Air India. So in its third attempt, Government of India (incidentally, all under the National Democratic Alliance regime), the earlier bids having been made in the early 2000s and 2017-2018, has managed to get rid of Air India.

While the Corporate chieftains and the media have gleefully welcomed the sale of Air India, we must admit, we, the people of India, including the Air India Employees, are most unhappy. Here are the reasons:

1. Your stated philosophy is “the Government has no business to be in business”. You have therefore embarked on selling all PSUs, denigrating some of them as “loss-making” is only a pretext to sell them anyway. The first NDA Government under Shri Bajpayee, even had a Ministry of Disinvestment and its sale of Centaur Hotel owned by Air India is quite notorious.
2. As recently as 2019-20, after the decision to sell it was made by your government, although Air India made an operating profit of Rs. 1,787 crore, its overall balance sheet reflected a loss of Rs. 7,427 crore because of the heavy burden of interest payments (Rs. 4,419 crore) and depreciation (Rs. 4,795.30 crore).
3. The historical context of Air India’s massive and crushing debt burden arises from four specific sets of policies adopted by the Indian government.
 - (a) The first was the decision in 2005-2006 to place a massive order — in one shot — for the purchase of 111 aircraft by Air India and Indian Airlines.
 - (b) As if this was not bad enough, a year later, the government forced Air India and Indian Airlines into a merger.
 - (c) The third element of this sordid story pertains to the aggressive pursuit of an “Open Skies” policy in India by successive governments, even when these have not been reciprocated by other countries.
 - (d) The fourth dimension of the longstanding and systematic neglect of Indian public sector airline companies has been the manner in which the interests of the two companies were blatantly surrendered to please private players.

In 2019-20, Air India made an operating profit of Rs. 1,787 crore, but its overall balance sheet reflected a loss of Rs. 7,427 crore because of the heavy burden of interest payments (Rs. 4,419 crore) and depreciation (Rs. 4,795.30 crore). The historical context of Air India’s massive and crushing debt burden arises from four specific sets of policies adopted by the Indian government.

Although the Ministry of Finance claimed that the “transaction saw keen competition”, the facts do not reflect this.

DO NOT DEAL WITH THE EMPLOYEES
IN A "USE & THROW AWAY" MANNER
ROLL BACK ENTIRE POLICY OF
SELLING THE NATIONAL ASSETS.

4. By selling Air India by hook or by crook (because it is slowly emerging that it has been sold for a song), the Government has tried to cover up its misdeeds as detailed above. Although the Ministry of Finance claimed that the "transaction saw keen competition", the facts do not reflect this. There were only seven responses, of which five were disqualified because they did not meet the specified criteria. Of the two remaining bids, one was by a consortium led by Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director of Spice Jet, which incidentally, not long ago, was on the verge of a meltdown; his bid valued the enterprise at Rs. 15,100 crore. Incidentally, the minimum price set by the government was Rs. 12,906 crore. It is obvious that Air India has been sold for a song. This is not merely because its sale offers the new owner greater avenues for profitability, but also because of the assets Air India owns: 141 aircraft, of which 118 are in airworthy condition, its airbuses, as well as Boeing 737s flown by Air India Express, are relatively new. The Tatas, therefore, are acquiring an airline, its fleet, its well-trained workforce as well as 4,400 domestic and 1,800 international slots at Indian airports as well as 900 overseas. Clearly, this is a sweetheart deal for India's oldest large conglomerate.
5. This sale of Air India to Tatas facilitates an Oligopoly. The combined revenues of the three airlines — Air India, Vistara and Air Asia (the latter two also owned by Tatas) — amounted to Rs. 40,500 crore in 2020, out of the total revenues of the entire industry amounting to Rs. 95,700 crore, i.e. 42.32%, whereas Indigo, has a market share of 37.41%. By any account, this would mean that privatisation of Air India has resulted in one of the most concentrated markets in India.
6. Last, but not the least, is the uncertainty hanging over the 14000 strong, well-trained and experienced employees. Although the government announced cryptically that the interests of employees would "be taken care of," there is little clarity about their future. Already they, through their Unions, are driven to serve a notice of strike due to a patently illegal directive dated 29.09.2021 issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, GoI, for evicting the employees from the quarters allotted to them, within six months. Please remember, the very same employees had been praised when they selflessly flew Air India flights to evacuate Indians trapped in dangerous situations. It is the very same employees, who, during lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic, worked tirelessly to implement Vande Bharat.

It is obvious that Air India has been sold for a song. This is not merely because its sale offers the new owner greater avenues for profitability, but also because of the assets Air India owns: 141 aircraft, of which 118 are in airworthy condition, its airbuses, as well as Boeing 737s flown by Air India Express, are relatively new. The Tatas, therefore, are acquiring an airline, its fleet, its well-trained workforce as well as 4,400 domestic and 1,800 international slots at Indian airports as well as 900 overseas. Clearly, this is a sweetheart deal for India's oldest large conglomerate.

We demand that you immediately instruct the Ministry of Civil Aviation to withdraw the said directive dated 29.09.2021 and not deal with the said employees in a "use and throw away" manner.

And we demand, that you roll back your entire policy of selling the National Assets, including the proposed sale of Air India.

PSGI Companies decide on Indiscriminate Closure & Merger of Branches & Divisional Offices

The Four PSGI companies have planned to drastically bring down the number of offices in the next three years as per the directive of the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance. *The entire exercise is aimed at increasing profits. This will come at the cost of services to the weaker sections of the population especially in the rural areas.* The AIEA has expressed concern over these developments and has written to the CMDs of all the four companies on 19th October 2021. The letter is as follows:

“A IIEA has noted that the four Public Sector General Insurance Companies (PSGICs) are formulating plans to close/merge/downgrade Branch offices and Divisional offices at a large scale. This is being done at the instructions of the Department of Financial Services (DFS) which has reportedly given a timeline of three years for reducing the number of offices of these companies to about forty percent of the present strength.

We understand the need of rationalization of some offices of PSGICs considering shifts in economic and industrial landscape, changes in channels of business and technological advancement. But the DFS' instructions do not seem to be addressing these genuine concerns of the companies. The mechanical setting of targets for reducing the number of offices appears more in line with the Central Government's declared policy of withdrawal of Public Sectors' presence from every sphere of economic activity. Therefore, AIEA strongly opposes such move as this reflects Government's intention of abdicating its responsibility towards its citizens.

This is a fact that the PSGICs are facing challenges in procuring businesses and maintaining their profitability, but this is mainly due to the predatory pricing as well as various manipulative tactics being resorted to by private insurers with the regulators remaining mute spectator in most cases. Private insurers' foraying into mainly profitable businesses even at unsustainable premiums help them to keep them afloat profit wise while the PSGICs which cannot deny any business on grounds of higher claims are certain to see their Balance Sheets under serious pressure. The PSGICs despite undertaking majority of flagship insurance schemes run by the Central as well as State Governments, which are mostly loss making portfolios, do not ask for any special favour from either the Government or the

regulators. What they need is a level playing field in the General Insurance Market which has been made practically non-existent by the uncontrolled maneuverings of Private Insurers. The DFS must be impressed upon to look into this aspect and take up the matter with the regulators in right earnest.

It should also be kept in mind that the prime objective of PSGICs is to serve people which necessarily mean that the General Insurance Business should be made reachable to the common masses in the remotest corner of the country. Hence, closure of offices in remote and unrepresented places on the ground of financial viability is not an option. The Management of these companies should come out with a proper strategy to run the offices in such places and make them viable.

One of the declared objectives for opening up of the General Insurance Sector for Private Insurers was to increase the General Insurance penetration in the country. The very fact that even after operation of private insurers for two decades, the penetration in General Insurance remains low. This can be increased by popularizing retail and suitable products in smaller areas. This can be made possible only if there is a physical presence of the General Insurance Companies. The PSGICs with their vast network of offices should focus on this aspect which still remains vastly unexplored.

In recent years, the PSGICs have been confronting with acute shortage of employees due to large number of retirements and absence of any recruitment. It is quite natural that the shortage of employees in operating offices is adversely affecting the servicing to policyholders resulting into fall of business of operating offices and ultimately making them financially unviable. Hence, DFS should be asked to immediately allow for recruitment to all cadres in all PSGICs, which has been stopped by

it since 2018, especially in National, Oriental and United.

We firmly opine that the above issues need to be addressed so that the PSGICs are consolidated further and contribute more to the economy as well as people's welfare. We are also aware that some offices of PSGICs might be needed to be rationalized due to the reasons cited in the earlier part of this letter. In such cases, we suggest that final decision should always be taken after discussion with all

stakeholders i.e. employees' representatives and agents of the operating offices which need to be closed or merged. The Management of those offices must ensure that the interests of the employees, agents and policyholders are not compromised. We appreciate the United India Management for initiating consultative process at RO level and expect other companies to impart necessary advice to their respective ROs for the same."



India fares poorly in Global Rank of Pension Systems Iceland tops Mercer study on retirement income systems

Old age security is a big worry for Indians as income at retirement is far from adequate for most people. Now, a global study done by Mercer Consulting validates this fear as it reveals that the Indian pension system ranks a lowly 40 in a comparative index of 43 systems.

The primary objective of this annual survey by the global management consulting firm is to benchmark each retirement income system using more than 50 indicators.

This year's index edition added four new retirement systems — Iceland, Taiwan, the UAE and Uruguay. In its maiden appearance in the Index, Iceland overthrew the Netherlands to receive the highest overall index value of 84.2. Thailand had the lowest overall index value at 40.6.

Sub-indices

According to the survey, India had an overall index value of 43.3 among the countries analysed.

The index highlights key strengths of retirement pension systems around three sub-indices — adequacy, sustainability and integrity, where India scored 33.5, 41.8 and 61.0, respectively.

The adequacy sub-index represents the adequacy of the benefits that are being provided, the sustainability sub-index represents the likelihood that the current system is able to provide benefits in the future, while the integrity sub-index includes many legislative requirements that influence the overall governance and operations of the system which affect the level of confidence that citizens have in their system.



Unorganised workforce

With little social security coverage in the country, the workforce in India has to manage pension savings on its own for the most part. The coverage under private pension arrangement is just about 6 per cent in India. "With over 90 per cent of the total workforce being in the unorganised sector, measures should be taken to get a larger workforce under pension savings. This would go a long way in improving the adequacy sub-index," the report said

According to Preeti Chandrashekhar, India Business Leader at Mercer — Health and Wealth, "Radical and strategic reforms are needed to ensure adequacy and sustainability of social security for each and every Indian. With the rules under new Social Security Code that covers unorganised, gig and platform workers expected to be notified soon, one should see significant improvement on this front in the medium to long term."

The report also underlines areas of improvement for the pension system surveyed.

(Courtesy: Businessline 19/10/21)



PUBLIC SECTOR INSURANCE INDUSTRY THE ROAD AHEAD

The drive towards greater financialisation of the economy is an important reason for the mad rush to privatise India's public sector financial institutions, including LIC and the PSGI companies. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the uncompromising struggle of insurance employees under the banner of AIIEA could successfully stall the government policy to privatise LIC and PSGI companies for 26 long years as recommended by Malhotra Committee in 1994... and now a new idiom of struggle is developing across the country against the destructive economic policies being pursued today. Insurance employees under the banner of AIIEA will certainly be proud partners of these emerging struggles in the interest of the industry, the public and the Republic.

Shreekant Mishra

The government has been using the pandemic engendered economic crisis to the hilt. The crisis is being used as an alibi for large scale privatisation of India's public sector institutions. Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman had announced a disinvestment target of Rs.1.75 lakh crore during this financial year. Of this, the government aims to mop up Rs. 1 lakh crore by way of selling its stake in public sector financial institutions and Rs. 75,000 crores by way of disinvestment receipts from CPSEs. The recently announced National Asset Monetisation Pipeline envisaging mobilisation of Rs. 6 lakh crores over a four-year period ending 2025 is a further step in that direction.

Public Sector insurance industry is under severe attack. The government is in a tearing hurry to bring IPO of LIC. It was not prepared even to wait

for the amendment of the LIC Act to carry forward the necessary legislative agenda. Therefore, the government stealthily sneaked in the proposed amendments to the LIC Act in the Finance Bill itself. Twenty seven amendments have already been made in the LIC Act. After this amendment, like any other listed company the LIC will now be governed by the Companies Act and SEBI Act (post IPO) as well. The government has recently selected Milliman Advisors LLP India as the reporting actuary for determining the embedded value of LIC. LIC has appointed Sri Arijit Basu, former MD of State Bank of India and former MD and CEO of SBI Life as a consultant to help launch the IPO. The Union Cabinet recently approved the disinvestment of equity in LIC and the ball has been set rolling. According to media reports, the government has shortlisted 10 merchant bankers

including Goldman Sachs Group Inc, JP Morgan Chase & Co and ICICI Securities to manage the IPO. Till now, it is not clear as to what would be the exact quantum of shares that would be offloaded. In view of the fact that LIC's IPO size is going to be huge, there are reports that LIC may split its IPO into two parts with a gap of a few months. The desperation of the government for LIC IPO can be seen from the fact they want nothing to be left to chance. Two issues need to be noted here. First, there is a plan to allow cornerstone investors and marquee asset managers to put in large funds ahead of the IPO. Secondly, the government also seems to be planning to allow FDI in the LIC by inviting strategic investors such as pension funds and overseas insurance firms to participate in the IPO.

The AIIEA has been opposing the IPO of LIC as it amounts to the first step towards privatisation. Our units are in the midst of campaign and struggle against this disastrous move. It is because of our campaign that the government was forced to announce in Parliament that they do not intend to privatise LIC. It is also due to our campaign that Section 37 of the LIC Act which gives sovereign guarantee to policies issued by LIC was left untouched. The unity we have built up on the issue of LIC IPO is to be further consolidated and expanded.

The way the government railroaded the GIBNA amendment Act 2021 disregarding all public opinion in favour of PSGI industry is indicative of the democratic deficit in the government. The government was not even prepared to send the bill to a select committee for closer scrutiny. The government had made a commitment in the floor of Parliament in 2015 that government equity in PSGI companies would remain at not less than 51 per cent. The finance minister however announced

Finance capital has become autonomous of the productive sectors of the economy. Finance capital is capable of generating huge profits for itself merely by speculations in the stock market. That is why we see the stock market registering huge increase everyday even when the real economy is in deep crisis. This drive towards greater financialisation of the economy is an important reason for the mad rush to privatise India's public sector financial institutions, including LIC and the PSGI companies.

in her Budget Speech 2021-22 that her government would be privatizing two public sector banks and one PSGI company. But the GIBNA Bill 2021 recently passed in Parliament gives sweeping powers to the government to bring down government equity below 51 per cent in any PSGI company it likes. The Bill is therefore a clear roadmap for privatisation of PSGI companies. The recent moves to close or merge Branch and divisional offices of some PSGI companies at the behest of the government are also steps in that direction. One redeeming feature of our struggle is that the issue of general insurance privatisation brought about the unity of all major opposition parties inside the Parliament. Political parties otherwise close to the ruling party were also supportive of us on the issue of general insurance privatisation. This should give us new strength to launch a powerful movement against the move to privatise PSGI companies.

We must realise today that financial institutions in the public sector, particularly, have come under increasing attack from the government. This is because the Indian economy has moved towards greater financialisation during the last decade. Finance capital has become autonomous of the productive sectors of the economy. Finance capital is capable of generating huge profits for itself merely by speculations in the stock market. That is why we see the stock market registering huge increase everyday even when the real economy is in deep crisis. This drive towards greater financialisation of the economy is an important reason for the mad rush to privatise India's public sector financial institutions, including LIC and the PSGI companies. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the uncompromising struggle of insurance employees under the banner of AIIEA could successfully stall the government policy to privatise LIC and PSGI companies for 26 long years as recommended by Malhotra Committee in 1994.

The public sector insurance industry- the LIC and the PSGI companies- have been doing admirably well in the face of intense competition from the private insurance companies and the pandemic induced economic crisis. As at the end of September 2021, the has procured 73,74,125 new policies and Rs. 85,112 crore of First Year Premium Income registering a growth of 19.68 per cent and (-)3.3 per cent respectively. While the subdued growth of LIC over the past couple of months in the individual assurance segment is a cause of concern, it is to

be noted that the high growth of some private companies is due to a low base effect. The four PSGI companies have generated a premium income of Rs.38,525 crore as at 30th of September and have shown a growth of 8 per cent with a market share of around 42 per cent.

According to a Swiss Re Sigma study, India is poised to be among the top 10 largest insurance markets in the world. The Swiss Re puts the protection gap for India at \$16.5 trillion. The market is bound to see an intense competition in the coming days for a larger piece of the insurance pie. FDI limit in insurance was raised from 26 to 49 per cent in 2015 during the first term of the Modi government. Now the FDI limits have been further increased from 49 to 74 per cent. They have also allowed foreign ownership and control of the insurance companies. With the management control in their hands, the foreign players would like to capture major share of the domestic household savings and enhance their profits. The insurance industry is bound to see some consolidation in the days to come as the recent developments suggest. Recently, HDFC Life acquired Exide Life in a stock and cash deal worth Rs.6,687 crore. ICICI Lombard is reported to have received the final approval of the IRDAI for its acquisition of Bharti Axa General Insurance. US based insurance firm Met Life is seriously considering raising its stake in PNB Metlife by acquiring a 15.27 per cent stake of IGE (India) Private Limited and Elpro International Limited. The consolidation of the private insurance companies will pose a big challenge to the market dominance of the public sector insurance companies.

We must brace ourselves for new and emerging challenges in the area of technological innovation and updation. The pandemic has pushed the insurance sector towards greater digitalization. While insurance penetration in India is around 4%, penetration of the internet in India is at 45%. Almost half of the 1.39 billion people in India have access to the internet. The ease of 'click and buy' has given a significant push to online purchasing. Online insurance market in India is expected to grow to Rs.22,000 crore by 2024. Insurtech - the use of technology in the sale of insurance products – has become the new buzzword today. According to the Standard and Poor Global Market Intelligence Data 2021, India is the second largest insurance technology market in Asia-Pacific. Insurance companies are capturing customers with the aid of technology. Using improved data analytics

and Artificial Intelligence (AI), insurance companies are developing products and rendering servicing according to the needs of the customers. Today's insurance industry is being driven by the millennials or new-age customers. Millennials form about 46% of India's workforce today. These 'digital natives' are not enthused by the old style of selling and servicing. They believe less in physical handshakes and more on digital handshakes. While it is true that insurance industry is largely relationship oriented and depends heavily on personal meetings to sell products, the pandemic has changed all that beyond recognition. 'Phygital Marketplace'- a combination of physical branches and digital platforms like phone-based contact centres, Chatbots, WhatsApp, Mobile Apps and social media- is slowly becoming the order of the day. The digital foot prints are already visible in the public sector insurance industry. We have to carefully balance the employees' interest with that of the institution while taking a call on the digitalization in our industry. The youth of today no longer prefer the plain Vanilla products. Our product basket needs to be spiced up to meet the needs of these customers. The pandemic has clearly shown that health insurance and retirement planning will be the key drivers of growth in the future. As per a World Economic Forum Report, retirees around the world will outlive their savings. According to this report, India is among the few countries in the world with a large retirement savings market. The public sector insurance industry has to seize upon the opportunity and develop products in these lines. Finally, the biggest challenge for us is to retain the loyalty of the customer by retaining our preeminent positions as epitomes of customer care. Our units have the capability to contribute to what is called UI and UX in the present times: User Interface and User Experience. The uncompromising struggle of insurance employees for the protection of public sector insurance industry under the banner of AIIEA for over three decades gives us the necessary confidence that we can reach out to our customers and retain their loyalty.

A new idiom of struggle is developing across the country against the destructive economic policies being pursued today. Insurance employees under the banner of AIIEA will certainly be proud partners of these emerging struggles in the interest of the industry, the public and the republic.

LIC IPO – Lessons from SBI

It is being propagated by some that LIC will remain public, while they compare it with SBI, the largest bank in India, which is still a public sector bank with 56.92% of the shares held by the Government of India ...but whether SBI is behaving as a public sector bank in a true sense and what changes are happening there, what are the causes of concerns and lessons to learn. SBI was a people's bank, but now it is more of a corporate's bank. Let us not allow LIC to be destroyed. Learn good lessons from SBI, not the bad ones.



Thomas Franco

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(Courtesy: CENFA October 11, 2021)

The union government is bent upon privatising the Life Insurance Corporation of India. They stealthily announced an amendment to the LIC Act by making a statement in the Union Budget 2021 and made it a part of the Finance Act 2021 instead of bringing it as a separate amendment. The authorised capital of LIC is increased to Rs 25000 crore from Rs 100 crore. The market capitalisation of LIC is estimated to be around Rs 8 to 10 lakh crore whereas its assets as of March 31, 2021, are worth Rs 38 lakh crore and investments by LIC are Rs 3676170 crore. Last year alone LIC collected a new business premium of Rs 1.84 lakh crore and its market share stood at 81.04% in terms of policies issued in March 2021.

The union government, some LIC executives and a part of the media are propagating that LIC will remain public while they compare it with SBI, the largest bank in India, which is still a public sector bank with 56.92% of the shares held by the Government of India (as on 10th Oct 2021). FIIs hold 10.42%, Non-Bank Mutual Funds hold 12.89%, financial institutions 11.5% and the general public 6.26% apart from few others holding a small percentage of shares in SBI.

What is important for the public and the employees to know is whether SBI is behaving as a public sector bank in a true sense and what changes are happening there, what are the causes

of concerns and lessons to learn. SBI was a people's bank, but now it is more of a corporate's bank.

After 1991, several neoliberal policies have been tried and tested with SBI. Instead of Agriculture Development Branches in which SBI was a pioneer, the focus was shifted to Corporate Accounts Group Branches. Now there are 51 of them in 8 cities and their credit as of March 2021 is Rs 818705 crore as against Rs 278949 crore belonging to SMEs and Rs 213000 crore belonging to agriculture. Today, SBI has 22219 branches, but it has 71968 Business Correspondents who run Customer Service Points. They could have been regular employees and SBI could have had 72000 smaller branches.

It is unnecessarily allied with Jio Payment Bank Ltd with a 30% shareholding without any return so far. The former SBI Chairman is part of the Reliance Board now. And Jio has announced the opening of 71000 outlets which will be a competitor to SBI, and they may want to take over SBI one day. Their strategies are for the long term. When newspapers and media seemed critical, they bought over the media houses and now own 72 TV channels. Taking over SBI will become possible on the day the Govt decides to reduce its shareholding to less than 50%. Against earlier promises to the Parliament by then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, an amendment to

the Nationalisation Act is anticipated in the next Parliament session for the public sector banks. It may include SBI by amending SBI Act too.

SBI has 4 shareholder directors on the board. None of them represents minority shareholders. There is no Employee Director & Officer Director after 2014 though the Act provides for it. The PMO doesn't care, in spite of court directives. SBI offered an Employee Stock Option Scheme, which was bought by many employees, perhaps assuming they are going to be the owners of the bank, but the share prices have not been steadily growing. There have been ups and downs. An attempt to elect a retired employee as shareholder director failed miserably due to manipulations by the Finance Ministry, which wields tremendous power.

SBI provided a VRS in 2001 as per the recommendations of a committee of FICCI and due to it 29000 employees out of 2,30,000 left the bank leading to a poor customer service. The staff strength which went up in 2017-18 to 2,64,041 due to hue and cry from the association and unions has come down to 2,45,652 in 2021 increasing the workload of the staff and destroying their work-life balance. Every officer in the bank cries today due to the pressure of work, and there have been many suicides.

Recruitment of subordinate staff has been completely stopped. SBI had regular drivers as employees. Now it is outsourced. Cleaning is outsourced. Maintenance of computers is outsourced. SBI has become a pioneer in outsourcing. Now even cash management is outsourced! A Career Development System (CDS) prescribed by the Boston Consultancy Group was implemented at SBI. It was called the 'Career Destruction System' by the associations, as it created a lot of anomaly, victimisation and dissatisfaction among the employees, but now it is being tried in other banks.

SBI again is becoming an experiment for colluding with Micro Finance Institutions for digital lending, though it has the best digital platform and was a pioneer in technology innovation. It has, already, got into an alliance with more than 10 NBFC – Fintechs. Under the previous Chairman, SBI increased service charges including minimum balance charges and many other banks followed suit. The present Chairman has removed minimum balance charges. Another attempt called 'Financial Inclusion Module' was tried but reversed later because the modular structure initially recommended by IIM Ahmedabad

suites better as per the McKinsey report.

Also, the Govt keeps influencing the decisions of SBI. The present Chairman focuses on retail loans, but pressure for corporate loans continues. Despite fulfilling targets under the government schemes, the government business is shifting to private banks. SBI was forced to invest in Yes Bank, which is still struggling. A merger of associate banks was forced despite the Chairman talking against it.

Similar issues will crop up in LIC once the IPO is over. The present promise that it will remain with the public is only eyewash. Just to mobilise Rs 90000 crore should the Government go for an IPO which is the first step towards privatisation? LIC gives more than this as an investment every year to help the Government's budget! A cursory glance at its balance sheet is revealing. It has nearly 4000 offices throughout the country; an agency force of nearly 14 lakh and 1,09,000 employees. It has assets amounting to Rs 3775690 crore. Its equity investment is Rs 663637 crore and in infrastructure, it is Rs 427870 crore. Its claim settlement ratio remains the best in the world.

LIC has invested in power, housing, water supply & sewage, roads, bridges, road transport, railways and other infrastructure. It is developing the nation. 23% of our GDP is from insurance funds. Its investment in Union/ State Govt projects is Rs 2401456.50 crore. Under the pressure of the Union Government, LIC invested in the IDBI Bank to save it and suffer a loss of Rs 12887 crore. LIC's insurance reserve is Rs 1278558.45 crore, cash and bank balance is Rs 2841100.06 crore, the bonus paid to its policyholders is Rs 5119539.53 crore. Its long-term investment is to the tune of Rs 3089499.50 crore. Its last year's profit after tax is Rs 2703.61 crore. It's interesting to see that the Government had only invested Rs 5 crores in LIC initially, the rest of the capital has been accumulated from the profit. LIC pays only 5% dividend to the Govt, while 95% of it is distributed among the policyholders as bonus. Will the private shareholders allow this? There are 24 private insurance companies in India, but LIC's performance remains outstanding. Let us not allow it to be destroyed. Learn good lessons from SBI, not the bad ones. We don't need neo-liberal policies which help only a few. We need people-friendly policies that benefit the majority. No more guinea pigs, please!





Image Courtesy: NewsLaundry

GIG WORKERS

The Precariat Class in the Neo Liberal Era

The gig workers are one more type of workers the neo liberalism has created. Subsistence salaries, a struggle for survival, and sub-par working conditions are part of the story of all gig workers. The Social Security Act only makes workers eligible for such benefits and this act is not applicable to Gig-Workers, as they are called “entrepreneurial-venture labour”. Therefore, they are demanding to treat them as Unorganised Workers.

S.Sivasubramanian

On September 20, 2021, the Indian Federation of App based Transport Workers, on behalf of gig workers, filed public interest litigation in the Supreme Court demanding that the Union government provide succour to workers affected by the pandemic. The petition has asked for gig workers and platform workers to be declared as unorganized workers so they come under the purview of the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008.

There is no proper government data available on gig workers in India. It is estimated that the number of service providers involved with various platforms has increased from 8.5 million in 2016 to 11.7 million in 2017 and 15 million in 2018. Some of the platforms laid off their employees due to a fall in revenue. In

May 2020, Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, Uber and Airbnb fired 13 to 25% of these platforms' workforce.

For 27 days in 2020, close to 3000 delivery workers from Swiggy went on strike in Hyderabad protesting slash in their remuneration from Rs.35 to Rs.15 per order. The strike was disbanded only after the intervention of the Joint Commissioner of Labour. It was the first time in India that such a negotiation was taking place, that too on the street. This year, in the lead up to Zomato's July IPO, several anonymous Twitter accounts set up by delivery workers called customers' attention to what they deem as “exploitative practices” employed by platforms.

Myth of Service Providers as Entrepreneurs

The gig workers function on day-to-day basis. But they are formally treated as entrepreneurs by the platform management. This treatment is an attempt to shift the risk of business to these “entrepreneurial-venture labour”. The individuals are presented as perceiving the work they perform as an investment that would bring returns other than wages in the form of a future payoff. This amounts to self-exploitation. Thus during the pandemic, the problems faced by the service providers were visualised as individual problems and the platform owner was not expected to provide them with any socio economic support.

A study says that the number of workers getting 16 - 20 orders a day went down from 30.9% of the surveyed workers before lockdown to 7.2% post lockdown. During the lockdown, despite working for more than 10 hours a day, workers did not get incentives as they did previously. The service providers have claimed that they have not received any minimum guarantee or pay packages from the platforms. The Service Provider was at the mercy of the platform for the allotment of tasks, setting up the price and getting a minimum guarantee.

Workers involved with digital platforms are not hired with the aim of nurturing long term bonds between workers and clients. They are presented as interchangeable personnel (faceless service providers) that provide services for the clients. The work in the platform economy is such that workers are not expected to socialise with or form any relationship with the customer, but instead, the platform is aimed at reducing the relationship between the two parties into a ranking and reputation system.

Unorganised Workers

- The product of Neo-liberalism

The employment scenario and the industrial relations in India have changed drastically during the last three decades of neoliberalism. The Indian industrial situation, which was primarily driven by domestic demand until 1991, has seen a paradigm shift in the post globalisation era. The proportion of workers in the unorganised sector and the unorganised segment of organised sector have risen steeply.

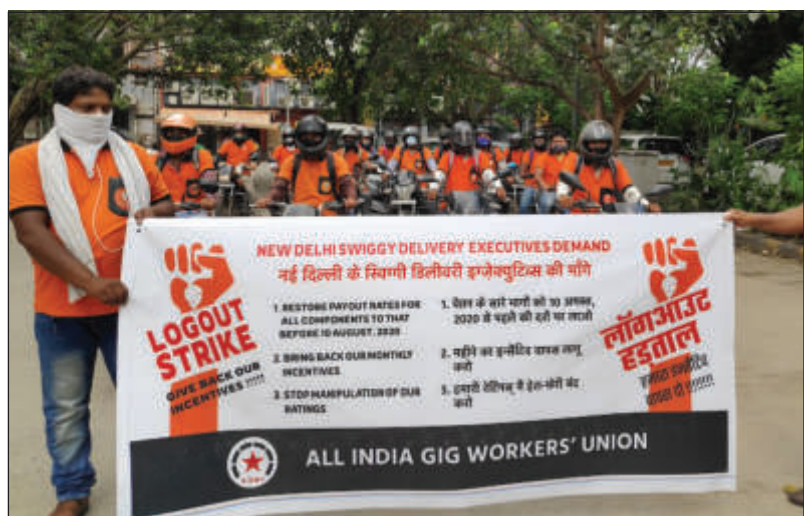
The share of contract workers in total organized employment has increased from 10.54 percent in 1995-96 to around 28 percent at present. According to official estimates, only 15.6 percent of the total workforce in the country is in salaried employment. It also indicates that the majority of the salaried workers are on contract employment. Around 50 percent of the workers in public sector units and more than 70 percent of the workers in the private sector are under contract system.

Newly emerging exploitative class

Different types of employment have emerged during this period of neoliberalism. One, within an industrial unit/establishment, large number of workers are employed through a contractor. Workers are supplied through employment agencies as contract, temporary, contingent, daily wage, casual labourers and so on. They do not have a direct employer - employee relationship with the principal employer for whom they work, even when they work on the same premises as the permanent workers.

In the second type, there is a decentralisation and fragmentation of the workplace through off loading/outsourcing/distribution of various parts of or whole production process to different agencies. The final product is assembled and brand named either at the company's main centre or by another agency. One more type of contract system is where a part of the production process is off loaded at a predetermined rate to another agency. The agency carries out the job on the same premises.

The gig workers are one more type of workers the neo liberalism has created.



Data published by the Annual Survey of industries shows that the share of wages in net value added has fallen sharply from 30 percent in the 1980s to 9.5 percent in 2009, while the share of profit has increased from around 15 percent to 55 percent during the same period. Rampant contractualisation is the major reason for the steep decline in the share of wages compared to the huge increase in the share of profits.

The average real wage per worker in the organised factory sector has declined drastically during this period. The contract/casual workers are paid only a fraction, sometimes less than one tenth of what permanent workers get. They are deprived of even minimum wage applicable to the industry. Most of them do not get any other benefits, including the social security benefits that permanent workers get. Now the gig workers are placing a demand to treat them as casual workers to get even the meagre benefits the government is offering to the casual workers. That is why the petition in the Supreme Court demands to treat them as Unorganised Workers.

Need to address the pains of gig workers

During the COVID 19 period, regular wage-salary earning employees protected by law and trade unions suffered though not much as pay and work arrangements varied within this class of persons. On the other hand, millions of informal workers and especially the migrant workers bore the brunt of the crisis losing livelihoods or even their lives in their quest for income. The frontline health workers gallantly delivered the much needed health protection services even though the less privileged ones, like an accredited social health activists (ASHA) and the Anganwadi workers, suffered more acutely, even brutally. It is necessary to note here that the Central government recognises ASHA and Anganwadi workers only as volunteers and not as employees and it pays them honoraria and not wages. Even in the case of coverage under Social Security schemes, there are big gaps. According to a statement in the Parliament by the labour minister on November 23, 2016, under various schemes under the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act 2008, only 120.8 million workers were registered. This means that only



25 percent of the 2011-12 estimated 390 million unorganized workers are covered.

India's 100 billionaires have seen their fortunes increase by Rs.12,97,822 crore since March 2020. According to the latest India supplement of the Oxfam Report, 'The Inequality Virus', 1,70,000 people lost their jobs every hour in the month of April 2020. The wealth of the Indian billionaires increased by 35 percent during the lockdown and by 90 percent since 2009 to \$422.9 billion. The increase in the wealth of the top 11 billionaires of India during the pandemic could sustain the NREGS for 10 years or the Health Ministry budget for 10 years. Pew Research Centre estimates say that the number of people below the poverty line in India have grown from 60 to 134 million during the past one year. India has contributed 57.3 percent growth of the global poor last year and as many as 59.3 percent of our middle classes have slipped into poverty.

The penchant for neo-liberalism by the Modi government and its callous approach towards the working class during the Pandemic, particularly towards the casual and migrant workers has pushed this section of the working class into destitution and deprivation. Subsistence salaries, a struggle for survival, and sub-par working conditions are part of the story of all gig workers. The gig workers have to be ensured suitable social security schemes relating to insurance, working conditions, disability and other benefits. The Social Security Act only makes workers eligible for such benefits and this act is not applicable to Gig-Workers. United struggles by the working class of this country alone can bring solace to the sufferings of this new section called 'gig workers'.

(Writer is Treasurer of SZIEF)





Concerns about inequality and criticism of the capitalist development were viewed with dubiety until the crisis of capitalism could no longer be ignored. There is now universal agreement among economists that the distribution of new wealth between capital and labour has become so one-sided that workers are constantly being pushed to penury while the affluent are getting richer. there is an acknowledgement of the crisis among capitalist moghuls. Remember the last speech of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar to the constituent assembly - " How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril."

Trinath Dora

The world economy is slowly recovering from the devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. But that is only partial solace. The recovery is uneven among countries and within countries. The emerging universal truth is that economic inequality is soaring sharply in all countries. A new report by Oxfam has revealed that the 1000 richest people worldwide recovered their losses from the pandemic within nine months as opposed to the world's poorest who might take a decade to limp back to their pre-pandemic standing. Inequality was alarmingly high and was destabilising social and political order in much of the world even before the pandemic struck. It is set to further aggravate, fear 295 economists from 79 countries commissioned by Oxfam. Inequality in India has risen to levels last seen when it was colonised. The additional wealth acquired by India's 100 billionaires since March 2020 when the lockdown was imposed is enough to give every one

of the 138 million poorest Rs 94,045, according to the report. An unskilled worker in India would take three years to earn what the country's richest person earned in one second last year, the report calculates.

The focus on growth has led politicians and policy makers to accept rising inequality as inevitable for decades. Inequality came to be seen as a benign outcome of economic growth that led to reduction of absolute indigence. Concerns about inequality and criticism of the capitalist development were viewed with dubiety until the crisis of capitalism could no longer be ignored. There is now universal agreement among economists that the distribution of new wealth between capital and labour has become so one-sided that workers are constantly being pushed to penury while the affluent are getting richer. On the one hand, there is an acknowledgement of the crisis among capitalist moghuls. The theme of the World Economic Forum at Davos is 'the Great Reset' which

says “a commitment to jointly and urgently build the foundations of our economic and social system for a more fair, sustainable and resilient future”. On the other hand, measures that favour capital at the cost of labour continue.

India today has an inequality problem of menacing proportions. In 2020-21 India’s economy experienced the largest annual contraction of 7.7 percent in the post-independence period. Yet, the stock market has recovered from an initial dip and is up by 75 percent from a year ago. The total number of Indian billionaires swelled from 102 to 140 in 12 months, as per Forbes India Rich List 2021. India now has the third highest number of billionaires in the world after the United States and China. The combined wealth of Club 140 has nearly doubled to \$ 596 billion in just the past year. This means 140 individuals had a cumulative worth equivalent to 22.7 percent of our Gross Domestic Product of \$ 2.62 trillion. The coalesced wealth of these 140 plutocrats went up by 90.4 percent in a year when GDP plummeted by 7.7 percent. “Prosperity rules at the very top”, says Forbes. The three richest Indians alone account for over 25 percent of the combined wealth of 140 billionaires. Mukesh Ambani’s total wealth alone almost equals the GDP of the state of Punjab. In the pandemic year, Ambani added Rs 3.57 trillion to his wealth – that is, Rs 1.13 lakh every single second on average – more than the average monthly income of six Punjab agricultural households collated.

Hurun India and IIFL Wealth recently released its report on annual ranking of the richest persons in India. 1007 individuals across 119 cities have

wealth more than Rs 1000 crore. “10 times in 10 years”- IIFL Wealth Hurun India Rich List has grown from just under 100 ten years ago to 1007 today. Mukesh Ambani continues to be the richest man in India for the 10th consecutive year with a wealth of Rs 7,18,000 crore. Gautam Adani, the second richest, almost quadrupled his wealth from Rs 1,40,200 crore to Rs 5,05,900 crore. His daily wealth creation velocity since 2020 was 1002 crore. Adani is now the second richest Asian after Ambani, overtaking China’s number one, bottled water producer Zhong Shanshan.

The World Inequality Database, developed by Thomas Piketty and his colleagues, provides a relatively comprehensive picture of wealth and income inequality over time and across countries. Analysis of the data points to an alarming rise in both wealth and income inequality in India. The share of total wealth of the top one percent of the population was fairly constant around 12 percent from 1961 to 1981. Since 1991, the year of liberalisation, it has steadily increased and reached 42.5 percent in 2020. The share of total wealth of the bottom 50 percent fell marginally to 10.9 percent from 12.3 percent between 1961 and 1981, and then slumped to a mere 2.8 percent in 2020. The share of total wealth of the middle 40 percent follows a similar pattern, hovering around 45 percent till 1981 and then falling steadily to 22.9 percent in 2020. Comparing the wealth inequality in India with that of other major economies, India has a relatively large gulf between the top one percent and bottom 50 percent. While United States stands out in this aspect, India has a larger disparity than France, China, Korea and Russia.

In the pandemic year, Ambani added Rs 3.57 trillion to his wealth – that is, Rs 1.13 lakh every single second on average



The evolution of economic divide in India over time should be analysed. Here, the share of top one percent of the population in total income was 13 percent in 1961 which declined to 6.9 percent in 1981. Then it escalated after the onset of liberalisation, going up from 10.4 percent in 1991 to 21.7 percent in 2019. The share of bottom 50 percent in total income stayed uninterrupted between 21 percent and 23 percent between 1961 and 1981, but thereafter it started deteriorating, going down to 14.7 percent in 2019 from 22.2 percent in 1991. The share of the middle 40 percent shows a similar pattern - it fell to 29.7 percent in 2019 from 42.6 percent in 1961. In terms of the gap between the top one percent and the bottom 50 percent, India stands apart among the major economies. The disparity is wider in India than the United States, China, Russia, France and United Kingdom. Clearly, since the advent of economic liberalisation in the 1990s, inequality has shot up.

It is 30 years since India adopted neoliberal policies in 1991. Dr. Manmohan Singh, in July 1991 budget, introduced neo-liberal policies in India. He ended his budget speech by quoting Victor Hugo, "No power on Earth can stop an idea whose time has come". Today, three decades later he says "a healthy and dignified life for every Indian must be prioritised. We must remember Robert Frost's poem – 'But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep'." One wonders what prevented him from doing so when he was at the helm of affairs. The votaries of liberalisation assess that these policies remarkably boosted India's GDP growth rate and thereby improved the lives of almost every Indian, lifting vast masses of them from the clutches of destitution, even though it increased economic inequality in the country. The liberalisers would even argue that the consequences of inequality would disappear if the growth rate in the economy is revived and increased. Moreover, Modi government would claim that boosting the capitalists' animal spirit is precisely what it is doing through its anti-labour and anti-peasant policies. In fact, what exactly happened is that liberalisation has boosted the rate of profit maximisation of surplus-earners at the cost of wage-earners.

The undermining of peasant agriculture under the neoliberal regime, which removed all the protection given to it during the preceding period, is

obvious. It manifests itself in the fall in profitability of peasants' agriculture and in the fact that between the 1991 and 2011 censuses, the number of cultivators fell by 15 million. Nearly 4,00,000 farmers committed suicide in India between 1995 and 2018 as per NCRB. The assault on peasants is intensifying today. The three farm laws were railroaded through parliament to enable big capital's interest at the expense of peasants.

The magnitude of penury has increased since the inception of neoliberal reforms. The percentage of persons with access to less than 2200 calories per day in rural India has increased from 58 in 1993-94 to 68 in 2011-12. The corresponding figure for urban India, where the original benchmark was 2100 calories per day, are 57 and 65 respectively. Matters have exacerbated since 2011-12. NSS large sample survey of 2017-18 threw up figures which were so perturbing that Modi government decided to suppress them altogether and discontinued these surveys in their old form. The unemployment rate in 2019 was the highest it had been for 45 years at six percent. The pandemic has worsened it further and the unemployment rate reached an all time high of 23.50 percent in April 2020.

India is celebrating 75 years of independence – Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav. The Prime Minister in his Independence Day speech enunciated about making a 'New India' by 2022. The vision of his new India is a toxic mixture of corporate neoliberalism and Hindutva authoritarianism. The crisis in the economy has led to the cementing of an alliance between big capital and fascistic Hindutva groups. Such an alliance is needed to sidetrack people from their economic predicament. Neoliberalism has ushered in an arrangement that is inimical to the basic premises of Indian constitution such as democracy, secularism and social and economic equality. Today, it is worth-remembering the last speech of

Dr. B.R.Ambedkar to the constituent assembly - "On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril."

(Writer is General Secretary ECZIEA)





भारतीय संविधान और जन आन्दोलन

We see nowadays mass movements, agitations by workers, peasants and other sections of the people being derided as anachronistic to a democracy. However, they forget that, it is on the basis of such mass movements during our century-old freedom struggle that we could give ourselves one of the most democratic constitutions.

रामजी तिवारी

दुनिया के कुछ बेहतरीन संविधानों में भारतीय संविधान का नाम आदरपूर्वक लिया जाता है। यह विशद और स्पष्ट है, साथ ही साथ इसमें आधुनिक लोकतन्त्र के बुनियादी सिद्धांत भी प्रमुखता से समाहित हैं। यदि हम सिर्फ इसकी प्रस्तावना को भी पढ़ें तो अनुमान लगा सकते हैं कि इसके भीतर क्या-क्या समाहित होगा। समता, स्वतंत्रता और बंधुत्व इसके आधार वाक्य हैं और अपने आरम्भ से ही यह सार्वभौम मताधिकार की गारंटी देता है। ध्यान रहे कि इसके लिए यूरोप और अमेरिका को पहुँचने में शताब्दियां लग गयी थीं। भारतीय संविधान में शासन के गठन से पहले नागरिकता और मौलिक अधिकारों का सिद्धांत प्रतिपादित है, जिसमें यह व्यक्ति के गरिमापूर्ण जीवन की बात कही गयी है। यह लोकतंत्र के तीनों स्तंभों को बराबर महत्व देकर एक संतुलन स्थापित करने की कोशिश करता है, जिससे कि विधायिका, कार्यपालिका और न्यायपालिका में टकराव न हों। और साथ ही स्वतंत्र प्रेस की स्थापना को मूल अधिकारों से जोड़कर उसके महत्व को भी रेखांकित करता है। कानून के शासन को सर्वोपरी मानना और हर तरह के भेदभाव का निषेध इसका मूल आधार है..

इसे पढ़ते हुए मन में यह सवाल जरूर उत्पन्न होता है कि संविधान निर्माण के पीछे आखिर कौन सी भावना काम रही थी, जिसमें हमारे संविधान निर्माताओं ने इतना विषद और महत्वपूर्ण कार्य इतने बढ़िया तरीके से संपादित किया। उनकी प्रेरणाएं क्या थी और वे कहाँ-कहाँ से प्रभावित थे। वे जो कुछ लिख रहे थे, उसकी पृष्ठभूमि कैसी थी और उसके लिए उन्होंने किन आधारों का चयन किया था। आजादी मिलने के बाद देश का एक संविधान होगा, यह बात तो दुनिया

भर में होती है। लेकिन वह संविधान इतना व्यवस्थित और लोकतंत्र के आधारों को मजबूत करने वाला होगा, इसकी कल्पना अधिकांश देशों में दिखाई नहीं देती। तो वे कौन सी प्रेरणाएं और कारक तत्व थे, जिसने भारत को इतने बेहतरीन संविधान से नवाजा।

इस बात की पड़ताल करते समय सामान्यतया हमें दो आलोचनाओं का सामना करना पड़ता है। पहला यह कि भारतीय संविधान में नया कुछ नहीं है, वरन यह तो दुनिया के विभिन्न संविधानों का सम्मिश्रण है। और दूसरा यह कि इसका मूल आधार 1935 का भारत शासन अधिनियम है, जो अंग्रेजों ने भारतीय लोगों की आजादी की मांग को संतुष्ट करने के लिए थोड़ी बहुत रियायतों के रूप में दिया था। बाद में संविधान निर्माताओं ने उसके बहुत सारे उपबंधों को ज्यों का त्यों संविधान में शामिल कर लिया।

इन दोनों आलोचनाओं में थोड़ी सच्चाई है। अर्थात् भारतीय संविधान में दुनिया के लोकतांत्रिक आन्दोलनों से विकसित होने वाले सिद्धांतों की छाप भी दिखाई देती है और अंग्रेजों द्वारा समय-समय किये जाने वाले सुधारों के नियम भी। लेकिन इसके वाजिब कारण हैं। भारत की आजादी के समय दुनिया में आधुनिक लोकतन्त्र के जो सिद्धांत विकसित हो रहे थे, उनसे भारत कैसे उनसे आँखे मूँद सकता था। क्या दुनिया सत्य और अहिंसा को इसलिए खारिज कर दे क्योंकि इसे गांधी ने अपने आन्दोलन का हथियार बनाया था। या हम समता, स्वतंत्रता और बंधुत्व को इसलिए नकार दें कि ये सब फ्रांसीसी क्रांति से पैदा हुए सिद्धांत थे। क्या हम मूल अधिकारों से इसलिए कत्री काट लें क्योंकि इसमें

मानवाधिकारों के सार्वभौम सिद्धांत की झलक मिलती है। या कि हम शक्ति के पृथक्करण के सिद्धांत को इसलिए नकार दें क्योंकि इसे एक फ्रांसीसी विचारक मांटेस्क्यू ने दिया था। दरअसल ये सभी तर्क आधारहीन और खारिज होने योग्य हैं।

दुनिया जब अपने समय को देखती है तो वह अपनी बेहतरी के लिए समाज में उपस्थित सभी चीजों की तरफ नजर दौड़ाती है, जो उसके लिए उपलब्ध है या जिससे वह परिचित है। उसकी काबिलियत इस बात में देखी जाती है कि वह कैसे अपने समय और समाज से सीखती है और उसका अपने देश और समाज के लिए सार्थक उपयोग करती है। जब हमारे देश का संविधान बना तो हमारे संविधान निर्माताओं ने इस मामले में बहुत दूरदर्शिता दिखाई। उन्होंने न सिर्फ दुनिया भर के लोकतांत्रिक देशों के संविधानों का अध्ययन किया, वरन उसमें अपने देश और समाज में लागू हो सकने वाले नियमों को सटीक रूप से चिन्हित कर अपने संविधान में जगह दी। यह उनकी काहिली नहीं, वरन उनकी काबिलियत, समझदारी और दूरदर्शिता थी, जिसके लिए हमें उनका आभारी होना चाहिए।

रहा सवाल इस बात का कि भारतीय संविधान के अधिकतर उपबंध अंग्रेजी सरकार के 1935 के अधिनियम से लिए गये हैं, तो इसमें कुछ भी गलत नहीं है। हमें इसके लिए भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन के भीतर देखना चाहिए, भारत की आजादी और भारतीय संविधान का निर्माण दरअसल जन आन्दोलन की ही देन है। खासकर कांग्रेस के गठन के बाद और उसमें भी गांधी के परिदृश्य पर आने के बाद भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष पूर्णतया एक जन आन्दोलन में ही बदल गया था। अंग्रेजी हुकूमत के विरोध में आम सामान्य जनता ने वे सब तरीके अपनाए, जो किसी जन आन्दोलन में अपनाए जाते हैं। जैसे कि अपनी मांगों के समर्थन में हड़ताल करना, विदेशी वस्तुओं का बहिष्कार करना, सभा और रैलियाँ करना, विरोध प्रदर्शन करना, असहयोग आन्दोलन, सविनय अवज्ञा आन्दोलन, भारत छोड़ो आन्दोलन, नौ सेना विद्रोह, सरकारी सेवाओं से सामूहिक त्यागपत्र और विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलाना आदि।

इसी जन आन्दोलन के फलस्वरूप भारत आजाद हुआ और भारतीय संविधान का निर्माण भी हुआ। यदि हम ध्यान से देखें तो इन जन आन्दोलनों के जरिये लगभग हर एक दशक में हमने अंग्रेजी हुकूमत से अपने लिए कुछ अधिक अधिकार हासिल किये और तत्संबंधी कानून बनवाये। 1909 के मार्ले-मिन्टो सुधार, 1919 के मांटेग्यू-चेम्सफोर्ड सुधार, 1927 का साइमन कमीशन या फिर 1935 का भारत सरकार अधिनियम बताता है कि हमारे जन आन्दोलनों ने समय-समय पर सफलताएं हासिल कीं। उसने अंग्रेजी सरकार को थोड़ा और पीछे धकेला। यदि हम 1935 के भारत सरकार अधिनियम को ही देखते हैं तो पाते हैं कि उसके पीछे क्रांतिकारी शहीदों का बलिदान, तीन गोलमेज सम्मेलनों की वार्ताएं और सविनय अवज्ञा जैसे आन्दोलनों की पृष्ठभूमि काम कर रही थी। अर्थात् जन आंदोलनों की एक सीरिज के बाद ही 1935 का अधिनियम अस्तित्व में आया।

यदि उसके बाद की घटनाओं पर भी हम नजर दौड़ाएं तो यह साफ़ दिखाई देता है कि 1935 के अधिनियम में जो

कानून पारित हुए, उसे भारतीय जनता ने सिर्फ एक पड़ाव की तरह देखा। इस अधिनियम के तुरंत बाद जब प्रांतीय विधान सभाओं में चुनाव हुए, भारतीय जनता ने उससे अधिक हासिल करने की मांग जारी रखी। 1942 का भारत छोड़ो आन्दोलन इसका चरम रूप था, जब भारत की जनता ने पूर्ण स्वतंत्रता से कम किसी भी मांग को अस्वीकार कर दिया। अंग्रेजी हुकूमत ने क्रिप्स मिशन, वेवेल योजना और केबिनेट मिशन के जरिये कुछ अन्य रियायतों का प्रावधान किया, लेकिन यह जन आन्दोलन कम नहीं हुआ। बाद में नौ सेना विद्रोह और भारतीय जनता के आंदोलित रूप ने यह तय कर दिया कि अंग्रेजों को देश छोड़कर जाना ही है।

सच्चाई तो यह है कि स्वाधीनता के साथ-साथ हमारे संविधान पर भी इन जन आन्दोलनों का व्यापक प्रभाव दिखाई देता है। अन्यथा जिस समय भारत आजाद हुआ, उस समय प्रतिगामी शक्तियों का कम बोलबाला नहीं था। साम्प्रदायिक दंगे हो रहे थे, जातिगत भेदभाव चरम पर था, आर्थिक रूप से समाज में भयानक असमानता थी और स्त्री-पुरुष के अधिकार भी समान नहीं थे। अर्थात् भारत में कुल मिलाकर लोकतंत्र के लिए कोई बहुत आदर्श स्थिति नहीं थी कि देश आजाद भी हो जाए और एक आधुनिक लोकतांत्रिक देश के रास्ते पर भी चलने लगे। संविधान सभा की बहसों को ध्यान से पढ़ने पर पता चलता है कि उस समय संविधान सभा में मौजूद तमाम प्रतिगामी ताकतों ने उसमें कई अड़चने खड़ी की थीं।

इसलिए आज इस बात को रेखांकित किया जाना चाहिए कि यदि भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन के पीछे जन आन्दोलनों की भूमिका नहीं रही होती तो हमें इतना बेहतर संविधान नहीं मिलता। एक ऐसा संविधान, जिसमें लोकतंत्र के सभी आधुनिक भावबोध समाहित हैं। जो किसी भी धर्मग्रन्थ से अधिक प्रगतिशील और आधुनिक है। जो सभी धर्मों का न सिर्फ आदर करता है, वरन उन्हें आधुनिक समाज के हिसाब से व्याख्यायित करने का विवेक प्रदान करता है। साथ ही साथ हमें यह भी याद रखना चाहिए कि आजाद भारत में भी जन आन्दोलनों ने भारतीय लोकतंत्र को बेहतर दिशा देने में एक सार्थक भूमिका निभाई है। भारतीय जनता ने यह समझा है कि समाज को बेहतर बनाने के लिए हमें लगातार संघर्षरत रहना चाहिए। और जो मिल रहा है उतने को अक्षुण्ण रखते हुए हमें अपनी मांगों के समर्थन में जनताको लगातार प्रेरित करते रहना चाहिए।

आज जब देश में जन आन्दोलनों के विरोध में तमाम तरह के दुष्प्रचार चलाये जा रहे हैं, यह बात बार-बार रेखांकित किये जाने की आवश्यकता है कि भारत ने अपनी आजादी का लड़ाई इन्हीं जन आन्दोलनों के सहारे जीती थी। और इन्हीं जन आन्दोलनों की पृष्ठभूमि में उसे इतना बेहतर संविधान भी हासिल हुआ था। जन आन्दोलनों को नकारात्मक रूप से लेने वाले लोगों को याद दिलाने की जरूरत है कि शांतिपूर्ण, युक्तियुक्त और प्रगतिशील जन आन्दोलन लोकतंत्र को बेहतर बनाने में मददगार होते हैं। इसलिए भारतीय लोकतंत्र में उनकी जगह बनी रहनी चाहिए।

(Writer is activist of Varanasi Division)

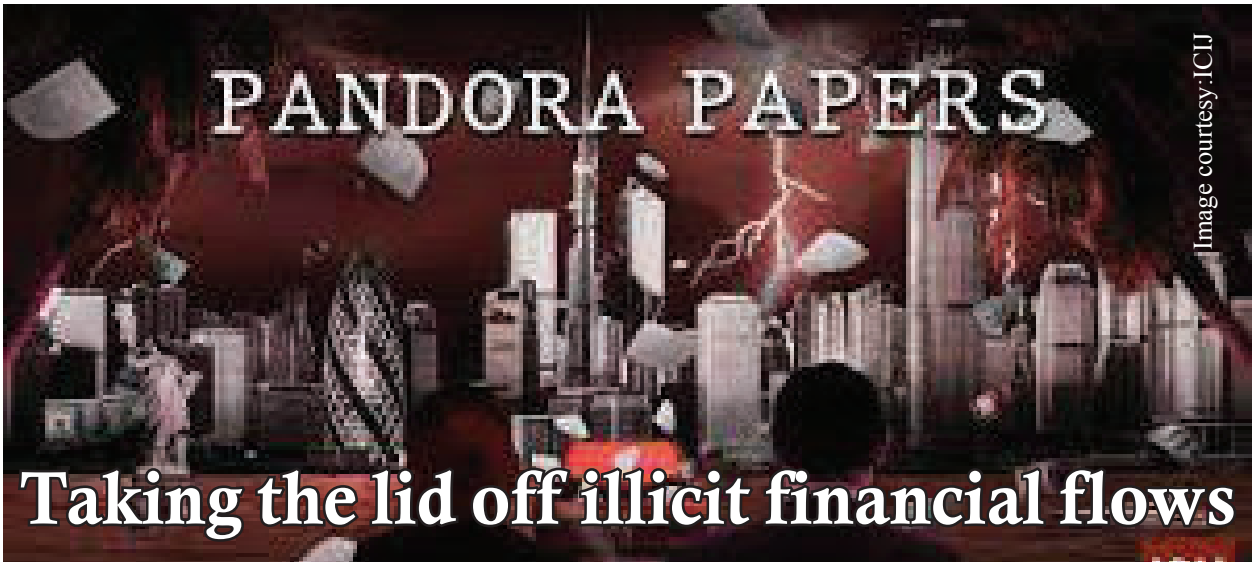


Image courtesy: ICIJ

PANDORA PAPERS

Taking the lid off illicit financial flows

Tax havens enable the rich to hide the true ownership of assets by using trusts, shell companies Financial firms offer their services to work this out for the rich. The leaked papers now and even earlier have exposed the international financial architecture and illicit financial flows using these tax havens. The Pandora Papers once again confirm this pattern. But these are, unlike the previous cases, not from any one tax haven; they are leaked records from 14 offshore services firms. These Papers have only highlighted the need for concerted steps to alter the global financial architecture.

Prof. Arun Kumar (Courtesy: The Hindu 13/10/21)

The **Pandora Papers**, published on October 3, once again expose the illegal activities of the rich and the mighty across the world. **The Pandora Papers investigation** is “the world’s largest-ever journalistic collaboration, involving more than 600 journalists from 150 media outlets in 117 countries”. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) has researched and analysed the approximately 12 million documents in order to unravel the functioning of the global financial architecture which helps illicit financial flows, in turn enabling the rich to throw a cloak over their incomes and activities.

Given the complexity of the tax laws and the loopholes available, some of the deft moves may be strictly legal, but not necessarily morally justified. The ICIJ says that while some of the files date to the 1970s, most of those it reviewed were created between 1996 and 2020. The ICIJ has also said that the “data trove covers more than 330 politicians and 130 Forbes billionaires, as well as celebrities... drug dealers, royal family members and leaders of religious groups around the world”.

History of leaked data

Since at least 2008, files indicating the manipulations by the rich have been stolen from financial institutions. In 2017, **the Paradise Papers** were leaked out mostly from the more than 100-year-old offshore law firm, Appleby, which operates globally. In 2016, **the Panama Papers** were obtained by hacking the server of the Panamanian financial firm, Mossack Fonseca. In these exposés, the British Virgin Island (BVI) figured prominently. The leaked documents from Luxembourg, the “**Luxembourg Leaks**”, appeared in 2014.

In 2008, a former employee of the LGT Bank of Liechtenstein offered information to tax authorities. There were Indian names also but the Indian government accepted the data only under pressure from the Supreme Court. The same year, Hervé Falciani obtained confidential data on HSBC bank accounts from remote servers and gave the data to then French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde (she later became chief of the International Monetary Fund to then move on as President of the European

Central Bank) who passed it on to the various governments, including India.

In the United States, in the mid-2000s, UBS Bank and Bradley Birkenfeld, who was acting as a private banker on its behalf, were prosecuted for enabling U.S. citizens to spirit away their income and wealth.

A large extent of the illicit financial flows have a link to New York City and London, the biggest financial centres in the world that allow financial institutions such as big banks to operate with ease. The leaked data show that these entities move the funds of the rich and the powerful via tax havens; Delaware in the U.S. is a tax haven. The big financial entities operating from these cities have been prosecuted for committing illegalities. In 2012, an investigation into the London Interbank Offered Rate or LIBOR — crucial in calculating interest rates — led to the fining of leading banks such as Barclays, UBS, Rabobank and the Royal Bank of Scotland for manipulation. These banks also operate a large number of subsidiaries in tax havens to help illicit financial flows.

The modus operandi

The leaked papers now and even earlier have exposed the international financial architecture and illicit financial flows. For instance, Panama Papers highlighted the template used in other tax havens. The Pandora Papers once again confirm this pattern.

Tax havens enable the rich to hide the true ownership of assets by using: trusts, shell companies and the process of 'layering'. Financial firms offer their services to work this out for the rich. They provide ready-made shell companies with directors, create trusts and 'layer' the movement of funds. Only the moneyed can afford these services.

The process of layering involves moving funds from one shell-company in one tax haven to another in another tax haven and liquidating the previous company. This way, money is moved through several tax havens to the ultimate destination. Since the trail is erased at each step, it becomes difficult for authorities to track the flow of funds.

It appears that most of the rich in the world use such manipulations to lower their tax liability even if their income is legally earned. The Panama Papers revealed the names globally of current and former leaders, politicians and public officials, billionaires, celebrities, sports stars, small and big businesses and professionals.

Is it that the rich move their funds to tax havens because of high tax rates? Not really. Even citizens of countries with low tax rates use tax havens. Over the three decades, tax havens have enabled capital to become highly mobile, forcing nations to lower tax rates to attract capital. This has led to the 'race to the bottom', resulting in a shortage of resources with governments to provide public goods, etc., in turn adversely impacting the poor.

The specificity of the Papers

The Pandora Papers, unlike the previous cases mentioned above, are not from any one tax haven; they are leaked records from 14 offshore services firms. The data pertains to an estimated 29,000 beneficiaries. The 2.94 terabytes of data have exposed the financial secrets of over 330 politicians and public officials, from more than 90 countries and territories. These include 35 current and former country leaders. Singer Shakira and former Indian cricket captain Sachin Tendulkar are among the celebrities and sport stars named in the investigation. Others include the King of Jordan, the Presidents of Ukraine, Kenya and Ecuador, the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Surprisingly there are few names from the United States, even though it has the largest number of billionaires.

The very powerful who need to be on board to curb illicit financial flows (as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or the OECD is trying) are the beneficiaries of the system and would not want a foolproof system to be put in place to check it. With the current global financial architecture, black income generation cannot be checked.

Revelations suggest that funds are moved out of national jurisdiction to spirit them away from the reach of creditors and not just governments. Many fraudsters are in jail but have not paid their creditors even though they have funds abroad.

Strictly speaking, not all the activity being exposed by the Pandora Papers may be illegal due to tax evasion or the hiding of proceeds of crime. The authorities will have to prove if the law of the land has been violated. Each country will have to conduct its investigations and prove what part of the activity broke any of their laws. In the United Kingdom, the laws regarding financial dealings are very favourable

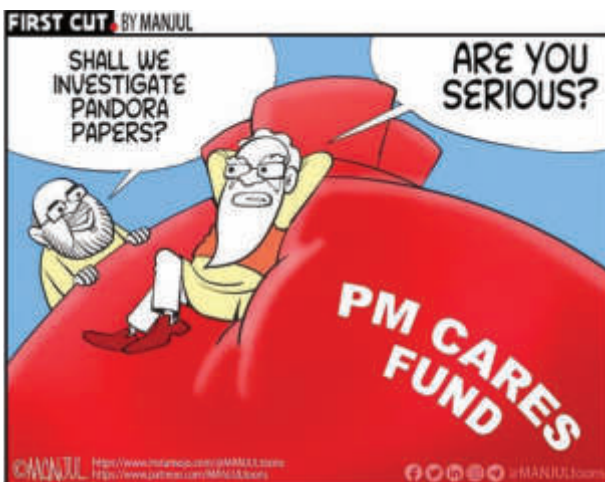
to the rich and their manipulations. It is no wonder, in the recent past, that several Indian fraudsters have thus fled to London to escape the Indian law. A large number of rich Indians have bought property in the U.K. Thousands of foreigners buy or rent property in the U.K. because no questions are asked about the sources of funds; this has enriched the U.K. by \$100 billion.

India's investigations

Many Indians have become non-resident Indians or have made some relative into an NRI who can operate shell companies and trusts outside the purview of Indian tax authorities. That is why prosecution has been difficult in the earlier cases of data leakage from tax havens. The Supreme Court of India-monitored Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up in 2014 has not been able to make a dent. The Government's focus on the unorganised sector as the source of black income generation is also misplaced since data indicate that it is the organised sector that has been the real culprit and also spirits out a part of its black incomes.

An interesting recent development (October 8) has been the agreement among almost 140 countries to levy a 15% minimum tax rate on corporates. Though it is a long shot, this may dent the international financial architecture. Other steps needed to tackle the curse of illicit financial flows are ending banking secrecy and a Tobin tax on transactions; neither of which the OECD countries are likely to agree to.

The author is Malcolm Adiseshiah Chair Professor, Institute of Social Sciences and the author of The Black Economy in India



Cartoon courtesy: Manjul, Firstpost

On the face of it, asking a question appears to be a simple act of responding to things with curiosity. Except for what linguists call 'phatic communication', such as 'how are you?' Or 'is everything okay?' Questions arise in one's mind out of the quest to know. They also arise out of concern for matters that one thinks are important. At a higher pitch, they are born out of philosophical anxiety, as in Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' or the *upanishadic* 'Ko aham? — Who am I?'

There are times when questions arise out of a collective desire to be assured that all is well with the State. When such questions are asked in Parliament, the technical term used to describe them is 'interpellation'. When asked outside Parliament and the assemblies by people who are imagined to be silent observers, they reflect the popular perception of government functioning.

I list only a few of the questions that people have asked but have remained unanswered.

When the coronavirus pandemic broke out, the prime minister made an appeal to contribute funds to a new trust called 'PM-Cares' created for relief. Citizens wanted to know if PM-Cares was a government entity or a private entity. It continues to remain surrounded by studied ambivalence.

During the NDA-I government, a committee was appointed to review the history of India for the last 12,000 years, a time span matching the beginning of the Holocene. Why was no representation given in that committee of experts to anyone from the Northeast tribal communities or from the southern Dravidian communities or to women? There was no answer.

In view of the India-China border clashes, one would have expected to know if the People's Liberation Army had crossed into Indian land and how deep. That information is not available with any clarity.

When the international media started talking about snooping by the spyware, Pegasus, citizens wanted to know if the government had authorized the Israel-based firm to mount surveillance on private individuals. The answer is not known to citizens yet.

Media reports say that the Sabarmati Ashram is to be renovated and made into a world-class tourist destination. On discussing with the trustees of the *ashram*, this writer was told that they do not have a clear idea of what is involved in the plans. Again a question without a clear answer.

SILENCE IN GREY



– Asking A Question is no longer a simple act

G.N. Devy (Courtesy: Telegraph 13/10/21)

In the gruesome killings at Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh, did the police think of it as a case of murder to be treated under the Indian Penal Code? Why were the suspected killers not arrested immediately? Why were political leaders detained without disclosing the reasons for their detention? These questions were in the minds of not just the citizens of India but even of the highest court of the country. Yet, no clear answers could be elicited.

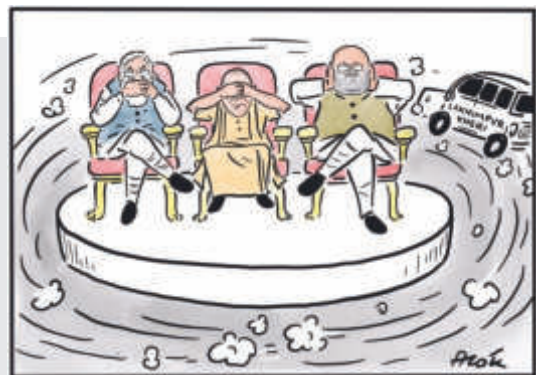
Recently, two instances of drug-trafficking and consumption shot into news, one involving a few grammes of a narcotic and the other nearly three thousand kilogrammes. Why the incident in Bombay received so much attention as opposed to the one in Mundra port is a question that is not likely to be answered.

In normal times, the government is expected to answer these questions inside Parliament as well as outside. However, if Parliament is transformed into a space where the term, 'interpellation', is no longer respected as part of its constitutional duty, it cannot be expected to satisfy citizens' quest to know the answers. The last session of Parliament had practically ruled out the 'question hour' and

Opposition benches had to literally struggle to get at least half an hour every day for questions. If elections — they cost so much to the country and to the taxpayers and take so much of the media's time and the nation's attention — do not ultimately result in a means of generating well-informed debates and providing answers, the form of the government that we have today calls for a name other than democracy.

In democratic countries, the media are expected to flag issues of interest, seek answers, and form perspectives around them and orient people's response to the functioning of public representatives. Barring several courageous individuals and a few honourable media organizations, the electronic and print media in India have clearly moved far away from this age-old media *dharma*. The symptoms of the abdication of their duty are too well-known for me to list them here. The causes of this condition that require our attention. Independent media require financial independence for media houses. The costs involved are so high that it is no longer possible in our time to even dream, let alone think,

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Cartoon courtesy: Alok Nirantar

of a financially self-sufficient media. Gone are the times when the print media was ruled by the editorial and opinion desks. For more than half a century now, they are being run by media companies or business houses. At this juncture of a fierce war between social media platforms and the print industry, to keep a print media venture afloat is close to a financial miracle. If, on top of the acute financial uncertainty made worse by the worldwide pandemic, there is the fear of intimidation of media workers and the trolling of opinion writers, it is not surprising that the media like to fend for their own safety. Electronic media ventures are costlier and, for the same reasons, tend to plunge more willingly for their own safety. Although one may not like the idea, the catch-phrase in financial markets is 'the media and entertainment industry', used to describe a rapidly growing combination of cinema, video games, entertainment, print and electronic media.

There is the rather naive hope that if the constitutional democratic fora and the media no longer can play their traditionally defined roles, the social media — on the fingertips of citizens — will salvage democracies from the current aberrations. However, these generate chaotic noise rather than well-searched information. Surrounded by so much noise, we live in an era without conversation, a political arrangement that can probably be called the 'No-question Regime'.

The author is a literary critic and former professor. He is known for the People's Linguistic Survey of India and the Adivasi Academy created by him.

Pathetic Income level of Indian Farmers

The report of the 'Situation Assessment of Agricultural Households and Land and Holdings of Households in Rural India 2019' released by the National Statistical Office in September 2021 reveals the pathetic income level of Indian farmers.

The average monthly income from different sources per agricultural household in July 2018 to June 2019 comes to only ₹ 10,218, where net receipt is obtained considering 'paid out expenses' approach. This amount of income further reduces to ₹ 8,337 when net receipt is obtained considering both the paid out and imputed expenses.

This means that the per day income of farm households is only about Rs. 277, which is not much different from the minimum wage rate paid under the national employment guarantee scheme.

The income-related data of farm households in India was released by the NSSO for the first time in 2002-03, with the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture. It is also popularly known as Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of farm households. Following this, the second SAS data series was published by NSSO for 2012-13 and now the third survey of SAS for the year 2018-19 has just been released.

Instead of addressing the problem and taking measures to enhance the incomes of the farmers, the government is bent upon corporatizing the farm sector. This is the reason why the farmers have been on agitation for over one year now demanding repeal of the three farm laws which were rammed through in the Parliament without any discussions.

India is short of 11 lakh Teachers

Unesco's recent State of Education report for India paints a bleak picture of India's strength of skilled teachers. The country is short of 11 lakh skilled teachers, with the rural parts of the country bearing the larger share of the deficit—69% of the vacancies are in schools in these areas. How acute the problem is for those lacking privilege is spelled out in the fact that 89% of rural schools in the country are single-teacher schools. No wonder, then, India had a mediocre showing in the UN's education index (0.555 in 2019, the latest such data available), and ASER findings across years show how poor the learning outcomes are for students in rural areas.

Teachers in the country have to contend with lack of job security, low salary, and the lack of benefits, respect associated with the profession, and autonomy— 43% of all teachers do not have a job contract at all, and, according to the Unesco report, they are one of the least paid public service professionals, which has consequences for the attractiveness of the profession. Private school teachers are worse off—of the 43% of teachers with no contracts, 69% teach in private schools, and they also earn around half of what their government-school peers get on average. Teachers also do not enjoy benefits such as pension, healthcare, or gratuity— only 41% and 11% of teachers employed by government and private schools, respectively, have access to all three.

The report lays down ten recommendations for the improvement of the current situation including obvious answers such as providing teachers with job security as well as the respect they deserve, along with providing proper training and creating an evolving career path.



28th Conference of IEA Hazaribagh Division

The 28th Annual general conference of IEA Hazaribagh Division was held at J P Singh Auditorium of Bharat Sevashram Milan Palace, Bokaro Steel City on 28th August 2021. Keeping in mind the abnormal situation arisen due to Covid-19 pandemic, the conference was restricted to Delegates only. The conference commenced with organizational flag hoisting, by Com L N Gupta, President, IEAHD, amidst inspiring slogans. Floral tributes were paid at the martyr's column.

The conference started with delegate session with Com M. K. Prasad, General Secretary placing the report on behalf of the working committee for discussion. Com Pradeep Mukherjee, President ECZIEA and the chief guest of the conference, dealt in details the crisis faced by the country due to the 2nd wave of Covid-19 and how the capitalist system, instead of combating the pandemic, using the crisis and attaching the hard earned rights of the workers. He criticized the NDA government for passing different anti-people, anti-worker and anti-farmer laws undemocratically by misusing the crisis situation owing to Covid-19. He emphasized that our every action should be focused against IPO in LIC and FDI increase from 49% to 74% in insurance sector.

Com Trinath Dora, General Secretary, ECZIEA and chief speaker of the conference, in his deliberation, said that the AIIEA has achieved a wonderful wage

revision due to the adoption of brilliant tactics and now it is our task to defend the gains achieved. He reiterated the twin tasks given by AIIEA of cautious campaign against IPO without discouraging our policyholders and broadens our unity in the industry by giving political ideological inputs among our members on war footing. He explained the intricacies involved in the IPO. He discussed the twin issues confronting the privatization of PSGI companies and long pending issue of their wage revision. He congratulated that the brilliant struggle of insurance employees under the banner of AIIEA that could stall the privatization for a period as long as 27 years. He gave a call to strengthen the organization at all levels. The discussions on the report of the working committee summed up by the General Secretary, IEAHD. At the end of the discussion the report and Audited statement of Accounts as well as 13 resolutions were passed unanimously. The conference donated a sum of Rs 5000/- to Insurance Worker and Rs 2000/- each to Bima Mazdoor, Andolan ki Khabar and Shramik Awaz. The 28th conference unanimously elected **Com M K Prasad, Com Jagdish Chand Mittal and Com Rabindra Prasad respectively as President, General Secretary and Treasurer for the ensuing term.** The conference ended with the vote of thanks given by Com D K Jha, Joint Secretary of IEAHD.

35th WOMEN CONVENTION OF ICEU MADURAI DIVISION - A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

The Working Women Sub-Committee of ICEU, Madurai Division organised the 35th Women Convention on 25th of September 2021, via ZOOM. The Convention was presided over by Com. **D. Chitra**, Convener of Women Sub-Committee. The program started with a bharathiyar song by Com. **V. Srikala** of CBO I, Madurai. Com. **G. Aruna**, Joint Convener, welcomed the gathering. A video clipping highlighting the activities of Women Sub-Committee from the First Convention was shared in the session. The Convener, Com. D. Chitra presented the report. Com. **S. Selvagomathi**, Joint Director, SOCO Trust and advocate, delivered special address. She highlighted the status of women in every walk of life and stressed on the need to bring about change. She elaborately explained the property rights of women and its legal implications and on various issues confronting women. 7 comrades took part in the debate and enriched the report.

Olympian **V. Revathi** was felicitated in the Convention. Com. Revathi, an athlete from Madurai participated in the Tokyo Olympics in 4*400 relay event. She was felicitated by Com. **J. Vijaya**, Joint Convener, LICSZWWCC.

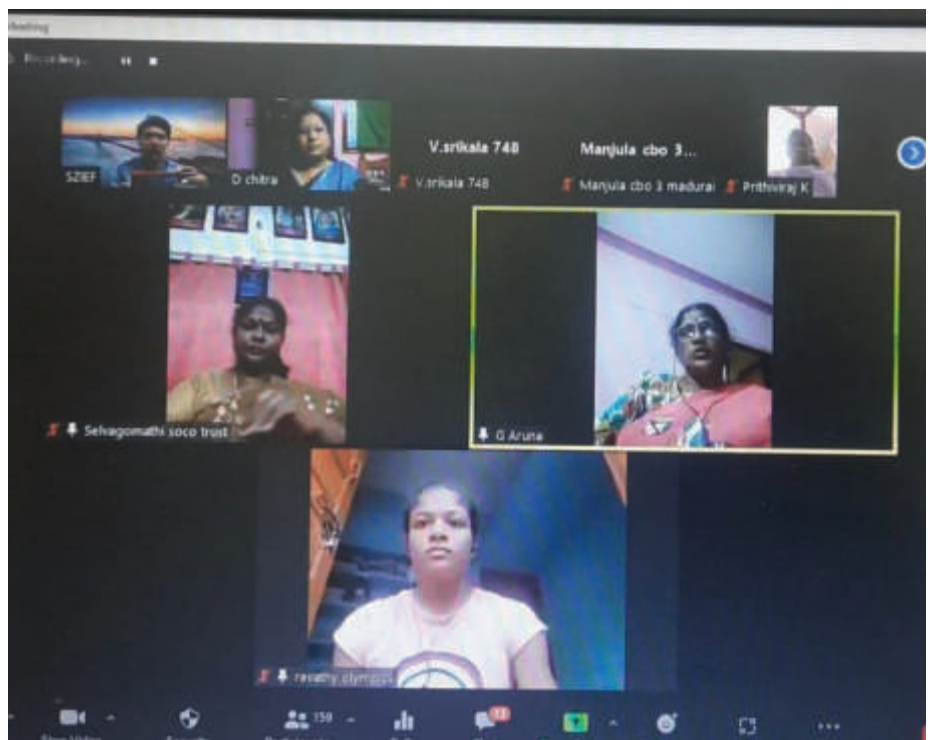
The Olympian Revathi addressed in the Convention. She shared her experience of participating in the olympics amidst the hurdles. She presented in a striking manner that has left a touching impact in the minds of audience.

Resolutions including passage of 33% Women Reservation Bill, Special Leave for Women for Menopause issues, strict implementation of Domestic Violence Act were passed in the Convention.

Com. **K. Swami nathan**, Vice-President, SZIEF delivered felicitation address on the occasion of Com. G. Aruna to be retired on 31st of October 2021. He traced the origin of the formation of Women Sub-Committee in Madurai Division and narrated the various activities of the Women Sub-Committee in all these years with specific reference to the immense contribution made by Com. G. Aruna.

Com. **N.P.Rameshkannan**, General Secretary, summed up the debate and announced the decisions to conduct Women TU Class for all women comrades, to activate Media Response Committee, to undertake the functioning of GWECA Committee to intervene in cases of Gender Violence.

The convention elected Com. **D. Chitra** as the Convener of Women Sub-Committee and a team comprising of 12 comrades as Joint Conveners for the ensuing term. The convention was a resounding success with a participation of around 220 comrades. The program came to an end with vote of thanks proposed by Com. **T. Vanitha**, Joint Convener.



Seminar opposing LIC IPO and privatization of PSGI Industry

A virtual meeting was organised by AIFAP on 19 September 2021 to oppose the anti-worker, anti-people move to privatise the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and public sector General Insurance Companies. The meeting was attended by nearly 500 participants and leaders from insurance, railways, electricity, steel, port and docks, telecom and other sector along with the activists of people's organisations.

Com Mathew welcomed the speakers, Com M Girija, Joint Secretary, All India Insurance Employees Association (AIIEA) and Com G Anand, General Secretary, General Insurance Employees Association South Zone (AIIEA).

He then welcomed the large number of national leaders from various all India federations and associations of different sectors who were attending the webinar apart from national and regional leaders of insurance sector, which included Com. Amanulla Khan, a stalwart national leader of Insurance workers:

The speeches by Com. Anand and Com. Girija were very insightful and well appreciated. The videos of their speeches and the PPT of Com. Anand are at the end of this post.

The speeches were followed by lively and useful interventions by a number of participants. The need to build solidarity of workers of all sectors to oppose privatisation in all forms was stressed by many participants.

Both the speakers pointed out that public sector insurance industry has made enormous contribution to the national development. The LIC which today is the finest and biggest financial institution has earned the trust and admiration of the nation and the policyholders through its dedicated work. The LIC IPO is the first step towards privatization and the AIIEA is determined to oppose it. It was also pointed out that the PSGI industry while playing an important role in the national economy has also been helping the government implement its social policies through cheaper insurance cover to the vulnerable sections. Despite the intense competition from the private sector, LIC has continued to dominate the market and the PSGI companies have performed extremely well. Therefore, it makes no economic sense in privatizing this industry and the reason for privatization is the ideological position of the party in government. Both the speakers recalled the glorious struggle of AIIEA beginning from 1994 when Malhotra Committee recommended privatization and took pride in the fact that for nearly 26 years, the insurance employees could halt the government policy. They also exhibited confidence in the present struggle and appealed all sections of the working people to support the AIIEA in this important struggle.

The program was very successful. The presence of the top leadership of trade unions in different sectors of the economy further added to the success.

International Elders Day and Pension Protection Seminar at Madurai

The Madurai District Forum of Pensioners had arranged a seminar at Sunil Maitra Illam, Madurai on 1.10.21 on the issue of need for universal pension in India in the absence of any social security and to observe the International Elders Day.

The pensioners of TN Govt., Postal dept, BSNL, EB, Transport, TANSAC, RMS, and LICPA numbering 163 participated. Com. Pitchairajan of Electricity Board presided over. Com.Guru Tamilarasu TNGPA welcomed the gathering.

Com.V.Shanmugam Jt. Secretary LICPA greeted the conference. Com.Madhukkur Ramalingam Editor of Theekkathir in his special address dealt at length the need to fight anti people policies of NDA. Issues of farmers' nationwide protest, the delay in settlement of retirement benefits in TNSTC and attack on PSU, were deliberated.

LICPA had offered food for one day to the inmates of Pykara Bharathi Orphanage (Home for orphaned senior citizens) on that day.

TN State Level Conference against PRIVATISATION and NMP

TRADER unions in the state conducted a special state conference against privatisation of public sector units.

The initiative for the meeting was taken by the CITU along with BEFI, AIEA, BSNLEU, Port & Dock Employees Union, Transport Union, Electricity Board Union and Dakshin Railway Employees Union.

Vijayan of the electricity union welcomed the gathering. The meeting was presided by Sugumaran, general secretary CITU, Tamil Nadu and T K Rangarajan, Central Committee member of the Party and ex-MP inaugurated the conference.

In his initial address, Rangarajan said "All the economic reforms initiated in India since Indian independence underlines the significance of the political-economic thought of the State at that particular point of time. After 1952, the implementation of the 12 Five Year Plans under the successive Congress regimes have paved the way for the nationalisation of the strategic sector, development of science and technology etc."

While speaking about the period since 2014, T R Rangarajan said: "When the Narendra Modi led NDA government took over, the concept of minimum government gained traction. BJP government insisted that it is not the business of the government to be in business and trade, commerce, industry, education, health etc., the private sector should play a major role in them. Consequently, reforms were initiated in the labour sector, diluting the labour laws enacted by the previous regime. Reforms in agriculture were initiated by enacting new laws in agriculture empowering the corporate sector and a much lesser role for government in MSP, procurement etc."

Rangarajan stressed that the trade unions and workers can fill this vacuum and effectively put up a valiant fight against these neo-liberal policies. Trade unions in Tamil Nadu must go to the nook and corner of the state and mobilise people. The union government's disastrous economic policies

have resulted in lakhs of industries in the MSME sector perish.

A book titled "*National Monetisation Pipeline*" compiled by R Elangovan of DREU and K Swamination of AIEA was released at the convention.

Retired judge of Madras High Court, Hari Paranthaman spoke in length regarding the history of the trade union movement, the character of courts and how the working class should align with peasant movements to counter the current authoritarian regime.

The convention was also greeted by leaders of various fraternal organisations – Narendra Rao of Port and Dock Workers Union, Raja Sridhar of HMS, Xavier of INTUC, M Girija of AIEA, S Chellappa of BSNLEU, G Anand AIEA, Chandran of CITU, Murali Soundararajan of AIBOC, C P Krishnan of BEFI-TN and Jaishankar. Nearly 500 employees of various organisations from all over the state participated in the seminar. A delegation of 100 employees from LIC and PSGI companies participated in the meeting. A notable feature of the convention was the appreciation of all speakers about the manner the AIEA carried struggle against privatization.

Thomas Franco of '*People First*' coordinated the entire seminar.

WEBINAR TO CELEBRATE

A Webinar was organised under the auspices of LIC Employees' Union, Kozhikode Division on September 1, on the Formation Day of LIC on the topic 'LIC @66 – Relevance of Public Sector and Politics of Disinvestment'. The Webinar was inaugurated by former Education Minister of Kerala, Prof. C. Raveendranath. Com. M. Kunhikrishnan, former vice president of AIEA also spoke in the Webinar.



Mupperum Vizha (Great Festival) at Cuddalore

The Cuddalore Branch unit under ICEU Vellore Division conducted 'Mupperum Vizha' in association with TNGEA and TNPWA on 07.10.2021. The program comprised of following three events:

1) National Poet 'Mahakavi' Bharathi 100th death anniversary 2) Mahathma Gandhi Tamilnadu (Madurai) Visit - 100 years centenary 3) Taking pledge to protect LIC and PSGI industry

All the people who attend the meeting were took the pledge to protect LIC in Public Section lead by Cuddalore BO SBM Sri. R. Sampath.

Com. Balki, Dist. Secretary, TNPWA presided over the meeting. Com. S. Vijayalakshmi, President, ICEU, cuddalore Branch Unit welcomed the gathering. Com.

K. Ravichandran, Dist. President and L. Harikrishnan, Dist. Secretary of TNGEA, T. Purushothaman, TN Pensioners Association and S. Jayashri, Vice President, ICEU Vellore Division were present.

National Poet Mhakavi Bharathi 100th year of death anniversary special speech was delivered by Sri. N. Baskaran, eminent Writer and Professor, Periyar Arts college, Cuddalore. He explained in great detail the life and works of Bharathi who strongly placed a case for a casteless, classless and equal society. Smt. Vetriselvi Shanmugam, State committee member, TNPWA gave details of the memorable of visit of Mahathma Gandhi to Madurai a century back and the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the contemporary world. Two Books named 'Naraha Maligai' written by Sudheesh Minni and Phuthiya(New) India (question and answer viz) composed by ICEU, Salem Division were introduced. This was done by Com G. Vaithilingam, Jt.Secretary, ICEU, Vellore Division and Smt. Katherin, President, TNPWA, Cuddalore Town.

More than 100 people from diverse sections of the society participated along with employees of LIC, agents and policy holders.

The program came a successful end with vote of thanks by Com. S.J. Regis, Branch Secretary, Cuddalore.

66th LIC FORMATION DAY

328 comrades from Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode and Malappuram Districts under Kozhikode Division of LIC participated.

President of LIC Employees' Union, Com. P.P. Krishnan presided over the Webinar and Sri. I.K. Biju, General Secretary of LICEU gave the welcome speech. The Webinar came to end with vote of thanks by Com M.J. Sreeram, Joint Secretary of LICEU.

SUCCESSFUL DHARNA PROGRAMME OBSERVED IN PSGI IDUSTRY IN EASTERN ZONE

The JFTU met on 19th September, 2021 in a webinar meeting and unanimously took decision to observe some agitational programs such as demonstrations, Badge wearing to conclude with a Half Day Dharana in front of Head offices and Regional offices of every PSGI Cos on 5th October, 2021. This program was decided to intensify agitation on the demand for wage revision, improvement in pension and against privatization.

These programs were successfully implemented in Eastern Zone by the JFTU unit of every state. At Patna and Ranchi Dharana programme were staged at National Insurance ROs with banner and placards exhibiting our demands. Demonstration was organised at every centre of two states as per decision. Com. Satyanarayan Prasad, President, EZGIEA, Com. Mithilesh Kumar, General Secretary, BJSIEA and Com Sunil Kumar, General Secretary, Pensioners Association of Bihar & Jharkhand addressed in the meetings along with others. In Orissa Dharana was organised in the state capital Bhubaneswar in front of National and New India ROs followed by demonstration. On behalf of AIIEA Com. Manas Pattanayak, Gen.Secy, Com. Bamadev Mishra, President of OSGIEA and veteran leader Com. K. C. Behera delivered their speech. Protest demonstration was held in various parts of the state like Cuttack, Sambalpur, Rourkella, Baripada etc. under the banner of Joint Forum. Despite various difficulties due to COVID-19 and restrictions imposed by the state government our NERGIEA unit also performed all the decisions of JFTU in coordination with the other constituents. On 5th October half day Dharana programme observed in Guwahati at Oriental and National ROs. In lunch time demonstration Com. Chapal Bhattacharjee, President and Com. S. R. Dev, Genl. Secy. of NERGIEA addressed the gathering. Along with representatives of other organisations veteran leaders of EZGIEA Com. A. B. Kumar and B. Baruah participated in the Dharana and spoke. Everywhere participation was encouraging.

In Eastern Zone grand show was staged in Kolkata in front of National Insurance Head Office. The state government led by Trinamul Congress



rejected our appeal for permission to hold our protest programme. Despite that a large number of officers and employees actively participated in Half Day SIT IN DHARNA from 10 am. Com. Sanjay Jha, Secretary, Standing Committee (GI), AIIEA addressed the gathering. He cited the logic with statistics in support of our demand for wage revision. He also shared with the employees the latest information about wage issues. Com. Jha was very much critical on the government policy which is anti working class and against the principle of Indian Constitution. All the key leaders of JFTU of Eastern Zone firmly told the gathering to be confident and asked to be prepared for long drawn struggle including strike to protect the public sector general insurance companies and against the decision of privatisation of Public Sectors. On behalf of AIIEA Com. Surajit Das, GS, EZGIEA and Com. Tapan Mitra, GS, WBSGIEA delivered their speech. The Participation and enthusiasm of all concerned certainly lead the movement to be a successful one.

HELPING HANDS... RELIEF ACTIVITIES BY THANJAVUR DIVISION

The helping hands of the members of ICEU, Thanjavur Division had extended towards the COVID 19 affected people during the first wave to the tune of Rs. 15,00,000 by contributing the same to the Tamilnadu Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The State had a severe hit by Covid 19 during the second wave causing large number of deaths. Many of our members, officers, Development Officers, Agents were also the victims. Affected people were running pillar to post for getting admission into the hospitals and to get oxygen supply, very badly.

At that time our members asked the Union to do something to improve infrastructures of the Government Hospitals where the same is very much inadequate. Immediately we had handed over a cheque for Rs. 1,00,000 to District Collector of Thanjavur towards CM's Relief fund. Then we have been asked to provide oxygen cylinders, purified water and consumables like mask, PPE kit etc. from various quarters of the surrounding Districts.

Generally, Urban Primary Health Centers are getting sponsors from various agencies. But, no such a vision is found towards Rural Health centers. After the discussion, we came to a conclusion that whatever be the help we extend to the Government hospitals that should be a permanent one. At that time, the administration of Rural Primary Health Centre of Keezhaiyur which is a remote village in Mayiladuthurai District approached us with a request to provide a Shelter in front of the hospital which

would be useful for the patients visiting the hospital for treatment. After making a visit to the hospital, our comrades of Mayiladuthurai fulfilled their request. Since there was no shelter, the patients including the aged people and pregnant ladies, were forced to stand in the open space. Then we had decided to provide a shelter to the tune of Rs. 1,00,000 to the said hospital from a fund collected from our members towards Corona relief.

The shelter was handed over to the Health Administration on 03.09.2021. It was inaugurated by Shri K. Venkatraman, Senior Divisional Manager of LIC of India, Thanjavur Division in a function organized by both the Hospital Administration and our Union. Office Bearers of ICEU, Thanjavur Division including Comrade S. Selvaraj, V. Sethuraman and M. Ravishankar, President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively and members of ICEU, Mayiladuthurai Branch Unit under the leadership of Com M. Dharmalingam, who was instrumental for this, participated. We were very happy on the participation of Doctors, Nurses and Superintendent of the respective health centre, President of Keezhaiyur Village Panchayat, Residents of that village too.

Our comrades of Kulithalai Branch Unit, every year observe the International Women's Day in a suitable manner that always extend towards the Government Schools in the rural areas in their Branch jurisdiction.

This time also, amidst the Covid threat, they conducted surveys, gather information about the needs of the Government Schools and did the welfare activities by constructing water tank worth Rs. 25,000 and dedicated the same on 24.09.2021 to the Government Higher Secondary School, G. Udaiyapatti village. They planted trees inside the School premises and honoured the rank holders of the students of the school.

Both the above acts of our comrades of ICEU, Thanjavur Division brought laurels not only to AIEA but also to LIC.



Moving at a speed as if it is Do or Die situation. "LIC is likely to file draft papers with the Securities and Exchange Board of India by November for the largest initial public offering, **we target to bring the IPO within this fiscal year and we have set strict timelines** Once the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) is filed merchant bankers will hold global and domestic road shows for investors by January" says a financial ministry official. The government has appointed actuarial firm Milliman Advisors LLP India to compute the embedded value of LIC and then the ministerial panel on disinvestment will decide on the government stake that will be divested.

And slowly the foreign partners are gaining a stronghold. US insurer MetLife Inc has entered into an agreement with IGE India and Elpro International to acquire their combined stake of 15.27 % in PNB MetLife India Insurance Company. With this the share of the MetLife Inc in PNB MetLife India will boost to more than 47%.

What's awaited for the employees of public sector general insurance companies!. After a review meeting held recently by the parliamentary panel of experts with the top officials of the Department of Financial Services and the public sector general insurers, Deccan Chronicle reports that a government source says "We have seen the huge losses incurred by the state-owned general insurance firms. They can't afford to run the business with such ongoing losses. The government is planning a structural change in the state-owned general insurance companies to cut their office size to a three-layer structure from the earlier four-layer ones..... It is expected that all the general insurance branches making losses or reporting too less or zero profitability will be either closed or merged with other branches." Citing example he quotes New India Assurance Company, which as at 31st March 2021 2214 offices, will reduce the number of offices by 650 to 1500. New India Assurance Company is not incurring losses on the contrary it is making huge profits, why then this reduction in number of offices?. Its Global Gross Premium for FY 2020-2021 was Rs.33046 crores. Profit before Tax and after tax as on 31st March 2021 is Rs.2031 crores and Rs.1605



crores respectively. As on 31st March 2021, Net worth of the company including fair value stands at Rs.36451 crores, Investments at Market value is Rs.68639 crores and Asset base at Rs.90189 crores.

Only 5 per cent of people in India have home insurance, 12 per cent have health insurance and only very

few have cyber insurance cover. A large number of 3 crore MSMEs are under-insured and 90 per cent of the Indian working population is in the unorganised sector and, therefore, life insurance, health insurance, and pension are very critical for them.

The life insurance sector witnessed significant claims in the first quarter of the fiscal due to the second wave of the pandemic and profitability has suffered as companies made provisions or reserves to alleviate the impact of the claims. While the pandemic has increased awareness and demand for life insurance products, particularly term life products, insurers have also paid out high claims, especially after the second wave of the pandemic. Claims for the sector in the second wave were up by two to three times of the first wave of the pandemic. While reinsurance has tightened underwriting norms, GIC Re has hiked rates earlier this year. It is estimated that term plan prices are likely to rise by around 20 per cent to 40 per cent across the board depending on age, sum assured and quality of life of the individual.

Despite paying a huge sum as claims and facing other challenges and constraints triggered by the Covid pandemic throughout the fiscal, the general insurance industry has seen its net profit rise almost 300 per cent year-on-year to Rs 3,868 crore and underwriting losses decline in FY21. Two dozen general insurance players including four public sector companies, five stand-alone health players and two specialised players — Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC) and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) — had made losses of Rs 1,403 crore in FY20, as per an analysis based on data from General Insurance Council. The industry's total underwriting losses fell 17.24 per cent to Rs 19,416 crore in the period.



WORKERS QUITTING THEIR JOBS HIT A RECORD IN THE US IN AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2021:

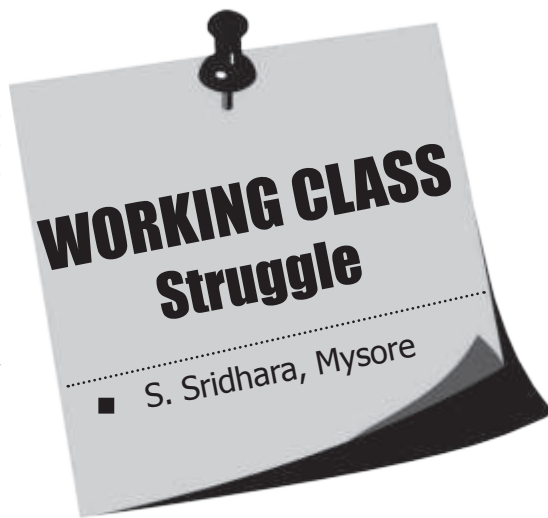
As the economy struggles to get back on track amid the pandemic, businesses are struggling to find employees. Nearly 4.3 million workers voluntarily quit their job in August 2021. The labour department latest bulletin on 12th October average hourly earnings have surged in recent months, particularly for the lowest paid workers and yet, many business report, they are still having difficulty in finding workers. The rise in average hourly earnings due to recent struggles by American workers for minimum wage per hour increases for 15 Dollars.

WAVE OF US LABOUR UNREST COULD SEE TENS OF THOUSAND ON STRIKE WITHIN WEEKS:

From Health care to Hollywood, workers are demanding higher wages, fighting cuts and seeking better safety and conditions. Tens of thousands of workers around US could go on strike in the coming weeks in what would be the largest wave of labour unrest since a series of teacher strike in 2018 & 2019, which was major victorious and gave the American Labour movement a significant boost. The unrest spans a huge range of Industries from health care to Hollywood and academics and in largely focused on higher wages, fighting cuts and better working conditions, especially in the light of Covid-19. About 24000 nurses and other health care workers at Kaiser Permanent in California represented by the United Nursing Association of California/ Union of Health care Professionals will vote on a strike authorization from 1st October to 15th October. Hundreds of building engineers at Kaiser in the San Francisco are already on strike. In another workers struggle after four months of negotiations with the Alliance of motion picture and Television, producers(AMITY), the International Alliance of theatrical stage Employees(IATSE), announced a strike authorisation vote for 60000 workers across the film and television industry in the US. If the Union moves forward with the strike, it would be the first among Hollywood production workers since the second world war.

HIGHLY DISPROPORTIONATE AUSTRALIA'S CASUAL WORKERS BEAR BRUNT OF JOB LOSSES AMID LOCKDOWN:

Latest Labour report shown people in insecure, lower paid positions suffered worst of the pandemic's employment impacts in 2021. Casual workers bore the brunt of Australia's Covid-19 lockdown in 2021. With a new report findings, they were eight times more likely to lose work than permanent staff. The report by the



Australia Institute's Centre for future work also found casuals were not being compensated for their "insecure" work, with median hourly wages 26% lower than permanent staff despite also lacking other entitlements like paid leave. Similarly those working part time suffered 68% of job losses between May & August 2021.

18th October, Grass Root

UNIONS STRIKE IN ITALY: Grassroots Unions in Italy are united against redundancies and social carnage and are on strike on 18th October 2021 in the private and public sectors. on 18/10/2021. The redundancies at the Companies GINETTI GOMME, GKN and Whirlpool came at the same time as thousands more workers are fired in smaller companies that haven't made it to be the headlines. Altogether, more than 9,00,000 workers have lost their jobs in recent months. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating social impact on health and on living, working and wage conditions and is still on going. The pandemic has dramatically exposed the collapse of the health system caused by a decades long policy of cuts and privatisation, as well on the destruction of social services(education, transport, childcare etc..). State repression of strikes and social struggles has increased intolerably with police attacks and brutality, fines and arrests.

FRENCH STRIKE OVER LOW WAGES BRINGS SEVERAL THOUSAND TO STRIKES: :

Several major unions in France held nationwide strike and demonstration on October 5, 2021. The purpose of the action is to call for better pay and working conditions and for the Government to abandon plans for benefit reforms, among other demands. Demonstration and rallies took place across France, largest being held in Paris.

GERMAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS THREATEN NATIONWIDE STRIKE FOR HIGHER WAGES:

Berlin, German Construction workers on 6th October announced that they are going on strike for higher wages and other payments. This is increasing pressure on employees to meet a range of demands including more compensation for long commutes to building sites. In Berlin, hundreds of workers took to streets with KETTLE-DRUMS AND TRUMPETS to underline their demands for a bigger share of profits. From a construction boom that has supported growth in Europe's largest economy. The union is calling for a wage increase of 5.3% for nearly 9,00,000 construction workers as well as alignment of tariffs.



- The Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021 revealed soaring levels of hunger among the poor and working population around the world. Every day, more than seven hundred million people, 8.8% of the world's population, go to bed on an empty stomach, according to UN World Food Programme. According to this report, hunger remained at "serious, alarming or extremely alarming levels in nearly 50 countries" and noted that "after decades of decline, the global prevalence of undernourishment is increasing." Around 41 million people are driven to the very edge of famine. Fueled by inflation and economic dislocation caused by the pandemic, world food prices are soaring. The FAO Food Price Index (FFPI), which measures change in international prices of food commodities, reported in September that prices were 32.8% higher than they had been a year before. The prices of most basic staple rose even more sharply; Wheat was up 41% and maize 38% from September 2020. While 43% of world population could not afford a healthy diet prior to Covid-19, by the end of 2020, the numbers had risen to 50%. A 32% rise in the price of food has a profound impact on the poor
- India has slipped to the 101st position in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021 of 116 countries, from its 2020 position of 94th and is behind Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Eighteen countries including China, Brazil and Kuwait, shared the top rank with a GHI score of less than five. The report, termed the level of hunger in India "alarming". India's GHI score has also decelerated – from 38.8 in 2000 to the range of 28.8 -27.5 between 2012 and 2021. The GHI is calculated on four indicators – undernourishment, child wasting (the share of children under the age of five who are wasted- i.e., who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute under nutrition), Child stunting (children under the age of five who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic under nutrition) and Child mortality (the mortality rate of children under the age of five). The share of wasting among children in India rose from 17.1% between 1998-2002 to 17.3% between 2016-2020, according to the report. As India's economy shrunk by 7.3% last year, the daily average wage for about 230 million Indians – enough to make the world's fifth largest nation – dropped below

the Rs.375/- (\$ 5) threshold. The number of people living in households with daily incomes below the \$ 5 level spiked from 298.6 million, at the start of the outbreak in March 2020 to 529 million at the end of September 2021.

- According to a new report from Wealth-X, for the first time in the human history, the world had more than 3000 billionaires, in 2020. This amounts to a 13.4% increase in billionaires from 2019, currently totaling to 3204 individuals, with a median wealth of \$ 1.9 billion. Billionaires' collective wealth swelled to \$ 10 trillion, a 5.7% increase from 2019. Billionaire wealth has increased steadily since 1990, but one-third of these wealth gains have occurred during the pandemic. US billionaires' wealth increased nineteen-fold over the last 31 years, from an inflation adjusted \$ 240 billion in 1990 to \$ 4.7 trillion in 2021. According to a report, American Billionaires' have seen their collective wealth surge by 62%, approximately \$ 1.8 trillion, since March 2020. Asia saw its number of billionaires growing by 16.5% to a grand total of 883. Asia's billionaires saw their collective wealth grow to \$ 2.6 trillion, a 7.5% increase. As a few thousand billionaires amassed enormous sums of wealth, workers around the world lost \$ 3.7 trillion in earnings during the pandemic, according to a report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
- According to Hunrum India – IIFL wealth rich list, there are 1007 people – 13 of them with more than Rs. 1 lakh crore of wealth – in the country with over Rs. 1000 crore of wealth. 179 more super-rich people led by Gautam Adani who amassed a whopping wealth of Rs.3,65,700 Crore or more than Rs. 1000 Crore daily, registering a growth of more than 51% of wealth. Adani family has increased their wealth by 261% from Rs.1,40,200 Crores to Rs. 5,05,900 Crores. According to Junaid, over the past decade, the rich have cumulatively added Rs. 2020 Crores per day – making it the fastest wealth creating in the country. Of the 1007 super-rich, 237 are dollar billionaires, up 59 from last year, and four times in the past decade. Geographically, five more cities (Rajkot, Surat, Faridabad, Ludhiana and Agra) are home to the super-rich, taking the number of cities to 119, and cumulative wealth rose by 51% while average wealth increased by 25%.



Breaking own records: LIC has booked a profit of Rs.21,000 crore, from stock market investments, between April and August already. LIC might go past its last year profit of Rs.35,000 crore.

How big is LIC: LIC holds \$511 billion of assets, **equivalent to the total size of the country's mutual fund industry.** The government is seeking a valuation of as much as Rs.8 trillion to 10 trillion (\$135 billion). At that level, the sale of even a 5% stake would make it India's biggest-ever IPO and a 10% dilution would make it the **second-biggest involving an insurer anywhere in the world.** Analysts at Jefferies India have said LIC's valuation could be as high as Rs.19 trillion.

PAN linking: PAN is now a mandatory tool for any investment, saving, or online transaction. Hence, LIC also has urged the customers to link the PAN with LIC policies. Policyholders can log in to LIC's official website (licindia.in.) to link PAN with the policies. LIC has kept the procedure easy that all of the customers and agents can get accustomed to the process fast.

Policy printing: LIC and the Department of Posts of Government of India have signed an agreement for print to post solutions. The print to post solutions are provided by the Department of Posts for printing and dispatch of the policy booklet issued under a life insurance policy.

LIC CFO: LIC has invited applications from eligible candidates for the post Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The move to hire a CFO follows a decision to redesignate LIC's top post to chief executive officer from chairman earlier this year following amendment to Life Insurance Corporation Act 1956 through the Finance Bill 2021.

PRAGATI App: LIC has launched a new mobile app 'PRAGATI' (Performance Review Application, Growth And Trend Indicator) for exclusive use of its Development Officers. 'Pragati' is a comprehensive mobile application which gives various information which are updated in near real-time about the performance of their agency force in critical areas of business performance like Premium collection, agency activation, prospective MDRT / centurion agents etc., apart from monitoring their team on activities such as usage of agents mobile app and NACH validations. There is also a calculator to measure their cost ratio.

Online grows: Online sale is gathering momentum in

the life insurance sector with one out of five term products being bought directly by customers are online rather than from agents and advisers. Last financial year, 12.5% of overall term policies by premium were purchased by Indians online.

Life sector: Life insurance companies have posted strong growth in September. The industry has grown at nearly 22% in the said month on a year-on-year (YoY)

basis.

Non-life sector: Health insurance recorded a 32% growth rate till August compared to 12.6% in the corresponding period last year, with premium growth of standalone health insurers being higher than the industry average so far. The motor insurance segment — which has struggled to gather pace in premium collection — is showing signs of recovery, with the segment registering a 6% YoY growth rate till August this year. However, it is still down 11% compared to the pre-pandemic period.

Recovery: Motor insurance is set to rise this fiscal year helped by increase in mobility as post pandemic economic recovery gathers momentum, rating agency Care said in a report. The agency expects motor insurance premiums to grow at around 6% to 8% driven by any increase in third party insurance rates and higher auto sales.

Cargo insurance: The sudden jump in the volume of oil, gas and coal being transported across the seas is pushing up cargo insurance premiums for India's general insurance companies. This is significant as the cargo insurance market had declined by close to 8% in FY21. However, in the current financial year (till August), the total premium for the sector has jumped by 33.6%, making it the second fastest after personal accident business, eclipsing heavyweights, motor and health insurance.

Untapped potential: Only 5% of people have home insurance, 12% have health insurance, three crore small industries remain uninsured and very few have cyber insurance cover. G Srinivasan, director, National Insurance Academy, said there is a 90% protection gap in the country and there is an urgent need to plug the increasing uninsured economic losses and loss of lives.

IndiaPost TATA-AIG: India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has announced an alliance with Tata AIG General Insurance Co. Ltd. for distribution of non-life insurance products across the country.



VOICE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR -Education Series

Voice for Public Sector, a YouTube channel promoted by General Insurance Employees' Association (South Zone) is bringing an education series on the Economy from the working class perspective. This series will cover the origin of modern capitalism and the political and economic developments thereafter. Three videos have already been

released. The first one is on the origin of modern capitalism; second on Great Economic Depression of 1939 and the third on reasons for First World War and the emergence of an alternative economic thought. The resource person is Com Amanulla Khan, Former President, AIIEA.

It has been decided to continue this series and the video will be uploaded in the morning of every Sunday. There has been good response from the viewers.



Com.S Savarimuthu, GIEAIA, greeting the launch of the channel

LIC Employee has to work for 8350 Years TO EARN WHAT ADANI EARNED IN ONE DAY

The IIFL Hurun Wealth Report released recently has listed 1007 individuals in India with net worth of Rs.1000 crore or more. Earlier Forbes had reported that India has the third highest number of billionaires in the world. India's 140 billionaires combined wealth has doubled in the last year to \$596 billion.

Hurun finds that these Indian super rich cumulatively added Rs.2020 crore per day – the fastest wealth creation in Indian history. This accumulation of wealth has taken place at a time when millions of workers have lost jobs and according to the government 80 crore Indians depend up ration supplied by it to keep their body and soul together.

Mukesh Ambani is the richest Indian with a wealth of Rs.718000 crore and Adani's wealth increased by 261% to reach 505900 crore.

The Hurun Report says that Adani wealth increased by a whopping Rs.1002 crore every day. This is at a time when the annual per capita income in India is Rs.128829 crore. The LIC employees are often accused as high wage earners. Even a LIC employee with an average monthly income of Rs.100000 will be required to work for 8350 years to earn what Adani earned in a day.

The neoliberal policies, privatization through which precious public assets are handed over to the crony capitalists have created never before seen income and wealth inequalities. The benefits of growth is being cornered by these super rich while development and growth has bypassed vast majority of Indians. Can such growth and development sustain? Surely not.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

Month	Base 2016	Base 2001	Base 960
Jan.2021	118.2	340.42	7770.30
February	119.0	342.72	7822.89
March	119.6	344.45	7862.34
April	120.1	345.89	7895.20
May	120.6	347.33	7928.07
June	121.7	350.50	8000.39
July	122.8	353.66	8072.70
August	123.0	354.24	8085.85

Base1960=Base2001x22.8259;
Base 2001=Base 2016x 2.88

DONATIONS

Com. M.Chandan, Retd, ICPA Bangalore Rs.5000
Com. Girijavallabhan, Trissur DO 2000
Com. Madhusudhan Rao, SCZIEF, Hyderabad 5001
Insurance worker heartily thanks these comrades for their love and affection

TOWARDS ALTERNATIVE TOGETHER WITH PEOPLE



We Stand for

**PEOPLE'S MONEY FOR PEOPLE'S WELFARE
PUBLIC SECTOR FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
LIC TO BE A 100% GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDERTAKING
MERGER OF PUBLIC SECTOR GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANIES**



We Strive for

**PEOPLE'S UNITY
WORKERS PEASANTS- UNITY
BROADER PUBLIC OPINION
AGAINST
NEO-LIBERAL ECONOMIC POLICIES**

LIC Employees' Union

Thiruvananthapuram, Kottayam, Thrissur, Ernakulam & Kozhikode

Insurance Corporation Employees' Union

**Chennai-1, Chennai-2, Vellore, Thanjavur,
Madurai, Tirunelveli, Salem & Coimbatore**

TAMIL NADU STATE CONVENTION OPPOSING LIC IPO

Date: 14.11.2021 Place: Madurai



Speakers

Thiru.Trichy Siva, MP, DMK

Thiru.K.S.Azhagiri, President, TNCC

Com.K.Balakrishnan, State Secretary, CPI (M)

Com.Mutharasan, State Secretary, CPI

Thiru.Thol.Thirumavalavan, MP, VCK

Thiru.Su.Venkatesan, MP, CPI (M)

**NO TO DISINVESTMENT
NO TO LIC IPO**

All are Welcome

**SOUTH ZONE INSURANCE
EMPLOYEES' FEDERATION**

