



XLRI in News

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शूटर गेम: खिलाड़ी के वायरस पर वैक्सीन शूट करना पड़ता है, बोरियत दूर करने के लिए किया तैयार

एक्सएलआरआई के छात्रों ने बनाया कोरोना शूटर गेम खेल-खेल में मिलेगी बीमारी से बचाव की जानकारी

डीबी स्टार | जमशेदपुर

एक्सएलआरआई के दो विद्यार्थियों अकरम खान और अनुश्री वारडे ने कोरोना वायरस के प्रति लोगों को सावधानी बरतने तथा लॉकडाउन में बोरियत दूर करने के लिए शूटर गेम तैयार किया है। जिसका नाम भाग कोरोना है। यह गेम खेल खेल में कोरोना के प्रति लोगों को जागरूक भी करता है।

इसमें आप घर में बैठे बैठे कोरोना वायरस के खिलाफ लड़ाई का हिस्सा बन सकते हैं। गेमप्ले को अभी तक चुनौतीपूर्ण रखा गया है, एक खिलाड़ी को वायरस पर वैक्सीन शूट करना पड़ता है जो स्क्रीन पर दिखाई देता है और स्कोर के उच्च स्तर तक पहुँचने

अकरम खान और अनुश्री वारडे ने किया तैयार, वायरस के प्रति कर रहे जागरूक



वेब ब्राउजर पर उपलब्ध

अकरम ने और अनुश्री ने वीडियो चैट के माध्यम से गेम तैयार करने की योजना बनाई है। क्योंकि दोनों झारखंड में लॉकडाउन लगने से पहले जमशेदपुर से अपने घर चले गए थे। अनुश्री मुंबई की हैं, जबकि अकरम दिल्ली से हैं। "भाग कोरोना" गेम

वेब ब्राउजर गेम पर उपलब्ध है और इसे सभी मोबाइल, टैबलेट और डेस्कटॉप पर एक्सेस किया जा सकता है। इसमें विज्ञापन नहीं हैं और यह अंग्रेजी में उपलब्ध है। डेवलपर्स इसे आईओएस और एंड्रॉइड एप स्टोर पर भी जारी करने पर काम कर रहे हैं।

खेल से कोरोना को हराएं और लॉकडाउन में हाथ धोने, घर पर रहने, मास्क पहनने का दिया संदेश



छात्रा अनुश्री ने बताया - गेम से हम लोगों को घर पर रहने के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर रहे हैं, खिलाड़ियों को हाथ धोने, घर

पर रहने, मास्क पहनने संदेश दिए जाते हैं। अकरम ने बताया - खेल की गतिशीलता और इसे चुनौतीपूर्ण बनाने के विचार के लिए फ्लेप्पी पक्षी से प्रेरित थे। गेम को अपनी रिलीज के एक दिन के भीतर, खेल पांच हजार बार खेला गया है।

पर गेम कठिन होता जाता है। अगर आप वायरस को शूट करना मिस कर देते हैं तो खेल समाप्त हो जाता है और एक शैक्षिक

संदेश स्क्रीन पर आ जाता है। छात्रों ने बताया - खेल का उद्देश्य कोरोनावायरस महामारी को खत्म करने के लिए जागरूकता फैलाना

है। स्कोर बढ़ने के साथ वायरस और स्मार्ट होने लगता है। शुरू में वायरस की गति धीमी रहती उसके बाद गति बढ़ती है।

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XLRI DUO'S CORONA GAME HAS 1.36 LAKH USERS

Bang-bang! Shoot the germ

ANTARA BOSE

Jamshedpur: Bored or stressed by the lockdown? You can shoot at the novel coronavirus.

Two human resource management at XLRI, Akram Khan and Anushree Warade of (HRM), have developed a browser-based game, Bhag Corona, that's not just a pastime but a source of information on the pandemic.

Launched on March 25, the game was played 2 lakh times on Tuesday. Starting with just 4,000 users on the first day, it has 1.36 lakh users from across the world, said Anushree, who's now at home

in Mumbai as XLRI is closed.

"We are using Google analytics to monitor how the game is doing and we've been surprised. It is not only Indians who are playing it but even the Croatians and many more," she said over phone.

The game's title is a reference to Union minister Ramdas Athawale's chant "Go Corona" that did the rounds on social media a couple of weeks ago. The game features Prime Minister Narendra Modi and has the "Corona Go" chant set to a beat playing in the background.

The developers said they have inculcated World Health Organisation guidelines for

personal protective measures to combat Covid-19.

Anushree said the idea was to find an entertaining way to educate people.

"Often, awareness on serious platforms is taken lightly, but an engaging game helps people understand the gravity of the situation," she said. "Children and youngsters needed to be educated on Covid-19 and this was the best platform. We used social media to promote the game," Anushree said.

Akram, who is now in Delhi, added: "We used the face of the Prime Minister because he is also the face of the lockdown."

In the game, a player has to shoot a vaccine on viruses that pop up on the screen. The shooter is Modi. The game becomes tougher with viruses moving faster. The player has to score higher to reach the higher levels. Each time he or she fails, a message — such as "use masks", "don't touch your face" and "wash your hands often" — pops up.

Asked if they wanted to commercialise the game, both Anushree and Akram said no. "This was created with a sole purpose to make people aware," Akram said. Added Anushree: "We are now working on a mobile application of the game."

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Joblessness Infects Bharat

CMIE report says unemployment rate in rural India has surged as lockdown forced migrant farm labourers to flee to their homes ahead of harvest season

Presented by
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NEW DELHI

Bhagwan Das, a farmer in the Bahkara region of Patna, Punjab, looks out to his swaying wheat crop. It's ready to be harvested but, unlike other years, there aren't enough farm hands to do the job. Any further delay will mean months of back-breaking work and investment going to waste.

Das knows the reason labour is scarce. It's not drought or floods or even a pest—those familiar foes of the farmer. It's the unseen coronavirus that is ravaging rural India.

"We depend on migrant labourers from states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They have left their villages. We are not sure how the harvest season will pan out. Will we be able to harvest our rabi crops in time, and then sow new crops in May and June?" he said.

Joblessness in rural areas, mirroring the situation in



urban pockets, spiked to record levels as the effects of the 21-day lockdown to blunt the spread of covid-19 panned out.

Weekly data put out by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reveals that the unemployment rate in rural India surged from 8.29% for the week ended 22 March to 20.29% on 29 March and 20.21% on 5 April.

This is the time in India when there is normally a big pick-up in demand for labour ahead of the harvest of the

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Joblessness infects Bharat as labourers flee to their homes

FROM PAGE 1

winter crop. This year, the lockdown has forced millions of workers to stay away. Many have no money.

"The timing couldn't have been worse. Joblessness comes against the backdrop of prolonged farm distress, triggered by a combination of the collapse of global commodity prices going back to 2008 and droughts over large parts of the country. But it's not farm workers alone—the lockdown has hit many other parts of the rural economy."

"The agriculture sector is battered, the fisheries sector has been crippled, the animal husbandry segment is in a bad position. The impact on rural jobs is huge. At least 40% of Indian are self-employed and if you ask a bulk of them—a cycle repairing shop owner, a pannaalali—you will realize that they are without work but they don't fall in the unemployment calculation," said Ravi Srivastava, director of the Centre for Employment Studies at the Institute of Human

Development, New Delhi. Almost 2,000 km from Patna, weaver Rajashankar V. of Bagahat district in Karnataka states at a crisis. "The market is dead," he said. "There are no takers for my products. Since people don't have money and jobs, who will buy my clothes? I have no income." The shutdown of inter-state movement between Karnataka and Maharashtra has impacted his small household business the most. "I used to send my products to shops in Kolhapur, Nashik and Solapur, but that has now stopped," he said.

"The risk is likely to worsen, economists predict. Even after the three-week lockdown is lifted, demand for labour is likely to remain low because of a stalled economic activity, according to Himanshu, an associate professor at Jawahar Nehr University in New Delhi.

He, in common with some other economists, advocates a stimulus focussed at rural India.

"To relieve pain in the rural



India has 263 million farm workers, including cultivators and labourers, though farming accounts for just 14% of GDP.

do not put in place a full-proof system for the entire rural ecosystem, we can see a social unrest."

Srivastava pointed out that the migration of millions of workers from cities to villages in the last fortnight will potentially exacerbate the unemployment situation.

Srivastava argued that rural workers need money in their hands and suggested that it be facilitated through direct benefit transfers.

According to the 2011 census, the country has 263 million farm workers, including cultivators and labourers, though farming accounts for just 14% of GDP.

"How will you differentiate among demand for labourers in an agri market of Punjab, the harvesting of wheat, the storage of food grains, the transportation of grains to the market or the cold storage. All are interlinked. Since everything is in standstill now, the impact on jobs is starting to show."

"In India, come, if governments at the centre and states

unrest, the attention has to be layered.

It must take into account agriculture workers, migrants workers who have moved back to villages, and small businesses in villages and rural townships. More than half of the jobs that small businesses create in the country are in rural areas.

"There is a clear need for a second stimulus package with a focus on the rural economy, people working there and devoid of social security nets. If the preventive lockdown continues, the unemployment scenario in rural India could see a surge."

Srivastava added that Bihar is facing a tough time. Joblessness is a common threat for us all and we are not sure how long this uncertainty will continue," he said.

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"To relieve pain in the rural

The pain around joblessness in urban India has just begun

Contract workers in hospitality and retail businesses have been hit by a drop in discretionary spending

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NEW DELHI

There are no jobs in key sectors in urban India, from restaurants and hotels to retail and automobiles, and this is just the beginning. Most contract workers in these industries have no income and the few who do are also likely to lose their source of livelihood as many small businesses, linked to discretionary consumption, shut shop. Discretionary consumption in travel, for instance, may not revive before October 2020. The bump up in unemployment following the national lockdown is reflected in data reported by *Mint* on Tuesday.

Urban India's weekly unemployment is trending at more than 30% since 29 March, up from about 9% in the first week of March, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy.

Staffing firm Adecco Group India had forecast job cuts in the automotive industry to total 1 million in the dealer ecosystem, front-line roles and among the semi-skilled. Some 600,000 ground and support roles on contract in the aviation industry are at risk while the media and entertainment industry, dominated by temporary workers, could shed about 30% of its workforce in the short term.



Workers in the unorganized sector are at a significant disadvantage in terms of job security.

ALAMY

"Very few will buy cars this year. Entertainment and organized retail will also be impacted. It is possible that people will visit malls after the

Team Lease.

The situation is not likely to get better anytime soon. This is reflected in jobs site Naukri.com's

hiring activity in March 2020 fell 26% in Delhi, 24% in Chennai and 18% in Hyderabad.

But there is a spurt in the demand for pickers, packers and delivery boys in urban India. Grocery companies are struggling to meet home delivery demands and are willing to pay ₹500 or more a day for these jobs. However, many job seekers are, for

now, willing to work for a fraction of that pay. Some of them worked in small restaurants and with the closure of eateries, they have no

income, said a restaurant owner who did not want to be identified. The food services industry in India staffed 7.3 million in 2018-19. Of this, the unorganized sector employed 3.6 million.

"Even if I can't pay my employees, I can help them withdraw money from their provident fund accounts, which is now permitted. However, the informal sector does not have that facility," said Anurag Katriar, president of industry body National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) and chief executive officer of deGustibus Hospitality. "While the organized sector deals with banks and investors, the informal sector borrows from moneylenders who are more ruthless." Informal sector restaurants are, therefore, more likely to shut down and sack workers.

Labour market experts see high urban unemployment rates continuing. New social distancing norms will impact jobs, too. "I expect the industry to adopt a 1:3 formula—in a shop floor, for every three workers who normally work, one worker may be recalled after the factory starts in order to maintain social distancing," said K.R. Shyam Sundar, labour economist and professor of human resources management, XLRI, Jamshedpur. "To that extent, the remaining two workers would either have to be paid wages or given a layoff compensation. Permanent workers would join back at work; informal workers (those on contract and daily wagers) may remain unemployed."

JOB DROP IN NUMBERS

OVER 30% urban India's weekly unemployment figure since 29 March, says CMIE

600,000 ground and support staff working on contract in aviation risk losing their jobs

26% decline in hiring activity in Delhi seen in March 2020 as per a job hiring portal's index

IN 2018-19, the unorganized food services industry employed 3.6 million workers

lockdown but these may not get the foothold that they used to earlier," said Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder at staffing company

JobSpeak index, a monthly index that records hiring activity based on newly added job listings on the portal. Compared to March 2019,

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Govt grant to industry for paying salaries unlikely

SOMESH JHA
New Delhi, 8 April

Lack of fiscal space will pose a big hurdle for the Centre to announce grants for industries to pay wages of employees unable to work because of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, according to multiple people in the know. In the past few days, industry representatives have had meetings with top government officials to deliberate upon an economic package, said sources.

"The government lacks the fiscal space. It will not be feasible to give grants to the industry to take care of its wage bills," one of the two persons said.

The government has set up an empowered group of officials, led by Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty, to finalise recommendations on economic and welfare measures. The committee has taken inputs from the industry, said sources.

"The fiscal situation is not good, with economic growth hurting and revenues drying up. Even the fiscal deficit of state governments is high. India cannot afford to have a downgrade from rating agencies. Grants to support the wage bill look unlikely," the second person said. The fiscal deficit of the Centre for 2019-20 (FY20) has already surpassed the Revised Estimates (RE) by 35 per cent till February 2019. The RE was higher at 3.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), against the Budget Estimate of 3.3 per cent.

For the current fiscal year, the government has pegged the deficit at 3.5 per cent of GDP, whereas the fiscal consolidation road map had pegged it at 3 per cent. The government has taken the escape clause of 0.5 percentage points for both FY20 and 2020-21.



PHOTO:PTI

INDUSTRY WISH LIST

- Assocham has demanded a ₹15-23 trillion package
- Says economy would need \$200-300 billion over the next 12-18 months
- Of this, \$50-100 billion (₹3.8-7.6 trillion) infusion needed over 3 months to arrest job loss
- Ficci has called for ₹9-10 trillion stimulus
- PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry wants ₹9 trillion
- SBI group's Chief Economic Advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh says ₹6.6 trillion would be needed
- CII wants support of about 2% of GDP
- Says govt should set aside a fund of ₹30,000 crore, which could be used by banks
- It called for providing ₹2 trillion to JAM account holders
- Banks should provide additional working capital limits, equivalent to April-June wage bill of the borrowers, at 4-5 per cent
- Says MSMEs should get additional loans with govt guarantee up to 20% of default
- Wants Covid insurance scheme for migrant workers, with govt and industry sharing cost

INDIVIAL DHASMANA

The country's sovereign ratings are at the lowest investment grade by Standard & Poor's and Fitch. Moody's assigned India a notch above the lowest investment grade. Some countries have announced financing the wage bill of industries to avert job losses in the economy through grants. For instance, the UK announced a bailout package for businesses worth £350 billion, under which the country would be financing 80 per cent of salary of workers earning wages of up to £2,500 a month. After informal discussions with the government, industry bodies have sought help from the

on the 'due date.' This is meant to be for the period during which establishments were under closure during the lockdown.

"Even after the government's directives, the workers are not being paid wages. The difficulty of the employers, particularly micro, small and medium enterprises and the start-ups, are completely understandable. The government should provide financial support to the industry and ensure workers are paid their dues," labour law advocate Ramapriya Gopalakrishnan said. Before the MHA's March 29 directive, the labour and employment ministry had issued multiple advisories to the industry to not lay off or retrench workers during the lockdown and asking them to deter from deducting wages.

Notably, the MHA order, which was issued under the Disaster Management Act, says the state governments have to issue their separate orders to implement the diktat. The district magistrates and the local police are the authorities to enforce the orders. But the firms have the right to lay off workers, under the Industrial Disputes Act, through which they can pay 50 per cent of the wage to workers for three weeks. But companies employing less than 50 workers do not have to pass on this compensation. "The government should address the lacunae in the law. Though it has rightly exercised the power under the Disaster Management Act, it should also make suitable amendments in the Industrial Disputes Act, which is the appropriate labour law to deal with such matters, to allow the pandemic to become a reason to lay off workers," said K R Shyam Sundar, professor of human resources management, XLRI, Jamshedpur.

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LABOUR RELATIONS

'PM must sound out trade unions for labour revival package'

CHITRA NARAYANAN

The Prime Minister should consult with representatives of trade unions and industry associations to deal with the implications of Covid-19 on workers, says labour economist KR Shyam Sundar, Professor, Human Resources Management Area at XLRI, Jamshedpur. Excerpts from an interaction:

CMIE's report shows a big spike in unemployment to 23 per cent in March, from 8 per cent earlier. Are we headed for steeper increases?

I feel that the CMIE rate could well be an underestimate as they may not have been able to capture the status of the stranded migrant workers. It could well be in the range of 35 per cent to 40 per cent.

What are the implications? Are we going to see a period of huge unrest?

The exodus of migrant workers itself was a form of unrest, the first manifestation. Migrant workers are neither here nor there — with no livelihood security in their origin State or host State. When a crisis strikes they look for social capital (support from kith and kin), which may be available in the origin place. Most reports show that migrant workers repatriate money to origin place. So the net savings in pocket is very less.

If the lockdown continues or even if staggered lifting of lockdown takes place, the labour market works against the worker. The first ones to be sacked and first ones to be employed are migrant workers. This is done in order to break the regular workers' bargaining power. This was seen in the past and is a well-known practice of employers. To prevent po-

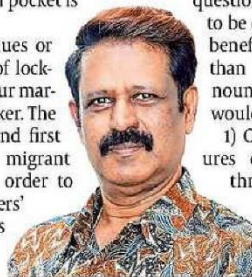
tential unrest, the Centre must consider poverty-level wages in Jan Dhan accounts of all people of a minimum of ₹6,000 for a period of time.

What about the relief packages announced by States?

State finances are far more vulnerable as GST refunds have not taken place. So the question is: are these promises going to be delivered? Upfront direct cash benefit through Jan Dhan is better than uncoordinated State announcements. Three measures I would suggest are:

1) Centralised coordinated measures of providing cash benefits through Jan Dhan accounts.

2) Effectively implementing PDS. Open State borders and allowing movement of vehicles. 3) Sprucing up MNREGA scheme could



KR Shyam Sundar



Neither here nor there Migrant workers have no livelihood security in origin or host State

soften the blow of unemployment. It should be aligned with the CPI for agricultural workers which, at basic levels, was at ₹300 for unskilled and over ₹400 for skilled workers. Also, the relief measures for workers must be in consultation with trade unions. The government has been speaking with industry associations, but trade unions and employer organisations must be involved too, in a social dialogue. After all, India has ratified ILO Convention C 144,

which requires the government to hold tripartite consultations. For the disbursement from PM-Cares fund, trade union representatives must be there. Trade unions will be able to offer credible field-based inputs for any government revival package. And their support will be crucial both at macro and micro level.

For full interview log on to <https://bit.ly/2jOX2Mb>

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কথা বলুন ইউনিয়নের সঙ্গেও, আর্জি মোদীকে

দেবপ্রিয় সেনগুপ্ত

করোনা সংক্রমণ রুখতে গিয়ে যে ভাবে আর্থিক কর্মকাণ্ডে তালা পড়েছে, তাতে বেকারত্ব কোথায় পৌঁছেবে তা ভেবেই শিউড়ে উঠছেন অর্থনীতিবিদদের একাংশ। তাঁদের দাবি, এমন থমকে থাকা অবস্থার সব থেকে বেশি মাসুল গুনবেন পরিয়ামী শ্রমিকেরা। তাঁদের প্যাশে দাঁড়াতে তাই প্রধানমন্ত্রী নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে ট্রেড ইউনিয়নগুলির সঙ্গে কথা বলার আর্জি জানিয়েছেন তাঁরা।

বিভিন্ন রাজ্যের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীদের পাশাপাশি প্রাক্তন রাষ্ট্রপতি ও বিরোধী দলের নেতা-নেত্রীদের সঙ্গে ইতিমধ্যেই বৈঠক করেছেন মোদী। শুনেছেন

শিল্পের কথাও। অর্থনীতিবিদদের আর্জি, অসংগঠিত শ্রমিকদের বেহাল দশা বুঝে সার্বিক পদক্ষেপ করতে এ 'বার তিনি বৈঠকে ডাকুন ইউনিয়নগুলিকে। কারণ 'মাঠের' খবর অনেক বেশি রাখে তারা।

কেন্দ্র কর্মী, বেতন ছাঁটাই না-করার কথা বললেও, অভিযোগ লকডাউন ঘোষণার পরে বহু ঠিকাকর্মীর চাকরি গিয়েছে। পরিয়ামী শ্রমিকদের অবস্থা তেমনই হওয়ার আশঙ্কা। জামশেদপুরে এক্সএলআরআইয়ের অধ্যাপক কে আর শ্যামসুন্দরের মতে, ৪৬.৫ কোটি কর্মীর মধ্যে করোনা-হানায় কাজ হারিয়েছেন বা সেই ভয়ে আছেন ৩-৫ কোটি। উপদেষ্টা সংস্থা সিএমআইই-র

হিসেবে বেকারত্ব প্রায় ২৪% বেড়েছে। পরিয়ামী শ্রমিকেরা এর মধ্যে না-থাকলে কর্মহীনের তা আরও বাড়বে।

শ্যামসুন্দরের দাবি, ইন্টারন্যাশনাল লেবার অর্গানাইজেশন এই সঙ্কট যুগে সামাজিক আলোচনার পক্ষে। সে ক্ষেত্রে কেন্দ্র ও শিল্পের পাশাপাশি বড় ভূমিকা নেয় ইউনিয়নগুলিও। কারণ, তারা সেই সব শ্রমিকদের সমস্যার কথা ভাল জানে। উপযুক্ত ত্রাণ প্রকল্প রূপায়নে যে তথ্য জরুরি।

সহমত আইআইএম-কলকাতার অর্থনীতির অধ্যাপক পার্থ রায়। বলছেন, “লকডাউনে সব থেকে বিপদে পড়া দৈনিক মজুর, পরিয়ামী কর্মীদের মুখপাত্র কারা হবেন?

বিপুল অসংগঠিত ক্ষেত্রের সমস্যা ও প্রয়োজনে শীর্ষ স্তরে পৌঁছেতেই ইউনিয়নকেও ডাকা জরুরি।” তাঁর মতে, কৃষি ক্ষেত্রে বহু পরিয়ামী কর্মী নিজের জায়গায় ফিরে গিয়েছেন। অবস্থা স্বাভাবিক হলে তাঁদের ফেরানো জরুরি। কারণ, এখন মজুত ভান্ডার দিয়ে কাজ চললেও খাদ্যশস্য উৎপাদনের সময় তাঁদের লাগবে। একই কথা খাটে অন্য শিল্পেও। না-হলে সার্বিক ভাবেই অর্থনীতিতে প্রভাব পড়বে।

করোনা মোকাবিলায় কেন্দ্র যে পিএম-কেয়ার্স তহবিল গড়েছে, তার অছি বা পরামর্শদাতা পরিষদেও ইউনিয়নের প্রতিনিধিদের রাখতে কেন্দ্রকে আর্জি জানান শ্যামসুন্দর।

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PAGE: 3

Need for consultation with trade unions to deal with COVID-19 crisis : Shyam Sundar

Kolkata: K R Shyam Sundar of XLRI emphasizes that "The PM should involve and consult with representatives of trade unions and industry associations to deal with COVID-19 crisis and to layout plans for lifting lockdown. Trade unions are doing essential and invaluable fieldwork relating to the migrant workers and their inputs to deal with migrant workers' issues will be relevant and crucial. Trade unions and industry need to work together as social partners and they should consider as vital stakeholders."

"ILO has advocated the use of social dialogue to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. Social Dialogue on a continuing basis at the macro level through Tripartite consultations (The Government, Industry and Trade Unions) is urgently required. This will facilitate response of vital information relating to the Industry's concerns. Taking the Social Dialogue principle forward the Prime Minister should nominate representatives of trade unions in the Board of Trustees or in the Advisory Board relating

to PM-CARES Fund."

K.R. Shyam Sundar, Eminent Labour Economist and Professor, HRM Area at XLRI - Xavier School of Management, Jamshedpur.

According to him, The PM should involve and consult with representatives of trade unions and industry associations in several ways to deal with the implications of Covid-19 in the world of work wherein around 465 million workers work and possibly 30-50 million workers are either rendered unemployed due to Covid-19 and/or already unemployed.

In fact, the "ILO Monitor 2nd edition: COVID-19 and the World of Work" (April 7, 2020) talks of four pillars of policy response and Social Dialogue figures amongst them. Social dialogue could involve both tripartite consultations and discussions between the representatives of the government (Central or the State), representatives of employers' organizations and of trade unions at the macro level and bipartite discussions between management and trade unions (collective

bargaining) to a) help the government to disseminate the relief measures and the dire need for maintaining Covid-19 hygiene such as social distancing, etc. b) secure information on the impact of Covid-19 on the world of work and the compliance with the government's advisory regarding non-termination of employment and government order relating to payment of wages and the reasons for non-compliance c) assess the reach of the relief measures and seek the concerns of the Industry and Trade Unions, d) the role that trade unions and employers' organizations could play in softening the shocks caused by Covid-19, e) seek suggestions to improve upon the relief packages, f) help trace the migrant workers and taking care of their welfare, g) take their suggestions regarding the plan for lifting of the lockdown and seeking their assistance in smooth return to normalcy. Taking the Social Dialogue principle forward the Prime Minister must seriously consider nominating

representatives of trade unions and the employers' organizations in the Board of Trustees and/or the Advisory Board relating to PM-CARES Fund.

At the firm level, management and trade unions can discuss the issues concerning employment, wages and social security and depending on the economic capacity of the employers can talk of concessions such as reduced pay or considering the period to be lay-off period and accept 50% pay in lieu of statutory full pay and pay cuts on the part of highly paid management officials, health issues concerning the maintenance staff, etc. during the Covid-19 lockdown period. Bipartite social dialogue will be essential in planning and executing staggered or universal lifting of lockdown as it will be well-nigh impossible to provide employment to all the workers immediately. Put simply, joint consultations will help smooth and caring workplace revival which will at once take care of business imperatives and workers' welfare.

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PAGE: 2

एक्सएलआरआई के विद्यार्थी कोरोना की जांच के विश्लेषण में करेंगे मदद

जमशेदपुर | एनआईटी के बाद अब एक्सएलआरआई के स्टूडेंट्स कोरोना के खिलाफ जंग में प्रशासन की मदद करेंगे। ये कोरोना के संदिग्ध मरीजों के सैंपल की जांच के आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण करने में सहयोग करेंगे। ताकि संक्रमण फैलने पर बीमारी पर काबू पाया जा सके। हालांकि जिले में अभी तक कोरोना का एक भी पॉजिटिव मरीज नहीं मिला है। लेकिन प्रशासन अभी से इसकी तैयारी में है कि अगर पॉजिटिव मरीज का पता चलता है, तो उस स्थिति से कैसे निपटा जाएगा। डीसी रविशंकर शुक्ला ने शनिवार देर रात सर्विलांस व स्वास्थ्य विभाग के अधिकारियों के साथ बैठक कर समीक्षा की। बताते चलें कि एनआईटी के छात्रों ने एक एप बनाया है, जिससे होम क्वारेंटाइन लोगों पर ऑनलाइन नजर रखी जा रही है।

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EDITION: All Edition

PAGE: 7

Firms keen to resume work

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi: Industry has sought an urgent relief package from the government as it warned of job losses and highlighted the plight of medium and small enterprises (MSMEs) because of the lockdown, which has now been extended till May 3 even as the Centre said the economy would gradually open from Monday.

"It is expected that close to 40 million jobs are at risk during the April-September period of 2020. Hence an urgent relief package is also critical," Sangita Reddy, president of industry chamber Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) said in a statement after the PM's address to the nation.

Reddy said a gradual opening up of the economy from April 20 (Monday) would ensure there would be no shortages in the economy when the lockdown was over.

"Even in case of essentials, we are seeing that supplies have started to get impacted and so the easing of lockdown may help ramp up production," she added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his televised speech on Tuesday morning said some restrictions on critical activities would be lifted in districts not designated as virus hotspots from April 20.

The Prime Minister said detailed guidelines would be issued on Wednesday.

"The PM could have utilised this golden opportunity to announce relief measures for the millions of precarious daily-wage workers and



BLEAK VIEW

the migrant workers who will now be potentially unemployed for 40 days rather than issuing another moral advisory to the employers not to terminate the employment of workers," according to K. R. Shyam Sundar of XLRI.

"He could have also sent signals to the MSME sector who will equally be vulnerable due to the extended lockdown. Both precarious workers and small industries need solid legal and financial support. The livelihood of workers and the sustainability of small businesses are seriously at risk," he said.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) pitched for measures tailor-made to support MSMEs, considering they are the backbone of the manufacturing and export sectors.

"With limited resources, MSMEs do not have the capacity to withstand massive shocks like Covid-19. In addition, many MSMEs are an important part of larger supply chains.

"The health of these MSMEs will have a bearing on the entire supply chain, including the large corporate," CII director-general Chandrajit Banerjee said.

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PAGE: 12

Guidelines on resumption may raise cost of operations: Experts

SOMESH JHA

New Delhi, 15 April

The government may have allowed industries in rural areas, special economic zones, and export-oriented units to resume operations from April 20 with some health riders, but experts say these conditions have the potential of increasing cost of operations.

"Protecting health will come at a cost for firms, as they have to provide for all necessary measures, including dormitory and transportation. The cost to company will considerably rise," said K R Shyam Sundar, professor (human resources management), XLRI Jamshedpur.

Guidelines released by the Union home ministry, on Wednesday, mandate firms to follow a standard operating procedure for social distancing at offices, workplaces, factories and establishments. For starters, all premises

have to be disinfected. Wearing of masks has been made compulsory.

Companies will also have to provide transport to employees, with "30-40 per cent passenger capacity" in each vehicle.

Workers will have to go through mandatory thermal screening at their workplaces. Medical insurance for all workers is mandatory.

A top executive of the Confederation of Indian Industry said ensuring health insurance for all workers would be major challenge for the industry that is already grappling with cash crunch, and the government should have borne the cost.

According to the guidelines, there should be no overlap in shift timing, though this might not be a big issue as it is already a mandate under the Factories Act of 1948.

"Large gatherings or meetings

of 10 or more people to be discouraged. Seating of at least 6 feet away from others on job sites and in gatherings, meetings and training sessions to be ensured," the guidelines read.

Sundar said this would lead to one-third of workers in a unit being left out, according to back-to-the-envelope calculations. "But with negotiations between employers and trade unions, there could be an arrangement by which all workers are called, but in rotation," he added.

Importantly, employees who have children below the age of 5 and those with co-morbidities will be encouraged to work from home.

The government has provided relief to self-employed workers such as electricians, mechanics, plumbers, and carpenters by allow-

ing them to go to work.

"There measures are largely targeted at reinstating the informal sector economy. It will certainly support the workforce that has left cities and returned to villages, whether it is in the construction sector or tea and plantation industry," said Rituparna Chakraborty, senior vice-president, Teamlease Services.

She said that though the order also helps the e-commerce sector in some ways, the real challenge would be to find workers because most have already left for home.

While she agreed that cost of companies will rise in the short run, she said it would become the new normal. "You cannot afford to restart work at the cost of health," she added.

Sundar said that since the circular gives a lot of leeway to open up the rural economy, governments should make an effort to transport migrants stuck in urban areas back to their villages.



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PAGE: 4

INTERVIEW | PROFESSOR SHYAM SUNDAR

Unorganised labourers need union and legal cover: labour expert

Lockdown means loss of income for 400 million informal workers which will push them into deeper poverty, he says

NISTULA HEBBAR

Professor Shyam Sundar is an eminent labour economist teaching at the Xavier Labour Relations Institute (now called Xavier Institute of Management, Jamshedpur) and is on the editorial board of the Indian Journal of Labour Economics. In an e-mail interview, he speaks in detail about the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown and on migrant and organised labour. Edited excerpts:

How do you see this extended lockdown affecting labourers across the country considering the majority of them hail from the unorganised sector?

■ The national lockdown now is potentially for 40 days and this means loss of income for more than a month for 400 million informal workers which, according to the ILO, will push them into deeper recesses of poverty. The informal workers are reported to be not able to avail even the additional free foodgrains and pulses since they do not have necessary documents

such as the ration card.

The issue of employment security will be a limited privilege to the labour aristocrats, i.e. permanent and skilled workers, and unemployment will be much higher than around 24% estimated by the CMIE. The absence of decent income flow, inaccessibility of foodgrains, etc., and absence of any social protection mean starvation and livelihood threats for these millions of unorganised workers.

What steps can be undertaken, within the lockdown period itself, to take care of migrant

labour?

■ One, in each State a multi-partite special task force or a board should be constituted to take stock of stranded migrant workers, constitute more relief/settlement centres, ensure compliance of basic needs, provide psychological counselling, etc. Two, establish helplines through social media, FM and other radio channels, etc. to connect with the unidentified migrant workers. Three, empower the tehsildars to issue temporary ration cards valid for 2-3 months. Four, information regarding the origin States of migrant workers could be built. Five, most importantly, they should be tested if they have travelled and/or living in congested places. Six, welfare of construction workers can be taken care of from the Construction Cess Fund. Seven, strictly implement the orders of the Supreme Court and High



Courts.

Employers are worried about the absent labour. What is the way out once the lockdown ends?

■ If long-distance migration is weakened, then there could be changes in the geographical composition of migrant workers in the sense that “neighbourhood migration” might replace “long distance and indiscriminate migration” as a solution which, if it succeeds, could change long-term migration effects.

Post-lockdown, the market wage is likely to be revised

downwards till recovery and then revival phases which are going to take some time and hence the naturally migrant workers who are used to under-bidding will be even more needed. But what will surely happen is the strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks concerning them, including portable ration cards and EPF accounts, etc.

How can one use this as an opportunity to organise the hitherto unorganised labour?

■ If there is any powerful lesson from this entire dreadful COVID-19 context, it is that unorganised labourers need two kinds of cover, viz. union organisation cover and legal cover.

In a sense the “market” for unionism is quite high in India as 85-90% of the 470 million workers are not organised by any trade union.

Mainstream trade unions will have to adopt unconventional organising strategies and adopt sector-specific employment relations strategies to organise the workers, though some work has already begun in this direction and hence India has witnessed rising unionisation unlike in the Western countries.

Trade unions need to work hard and persistently to ensure large-scale registrations of unorganised workers under the Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008 and pressurise the government to issue smart portable electronic chip-based registration-cum-identification cards as envisaged in the said Act. Direct benefit transfer (DBT) to these millions of workers would have been easier. If the union coverage is larger then trade unions could not have been ignored by the government in the design and delivery of relief measures.

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PAGE: 2

On Impact on NBFC of the RBI Policy



HK Pradhan, Professor of
Finance & Economics, XLR

Kolkata: With the RBI cutting the reverse repo rate by 25 basis point this time, and a 90 basis point cut already on March 27, the signalling is for the banks not to invest excess funds with the RBI, but engage in business loans. There is also an additional mandate for the banks to utilise 50 per cent of their borrowing from RBI through TLTRO (targeted long term repo operations) for lending to SMEs and NBFCs. Better and bigger NBFCs should be able to issue bonds where banks can utilise this money.

Further, the banks can also grant moratorium to NBFCs on their repayment obligations, subject to additional provision of 10 per cent at the moment. All these are very welcome steps, taken together will have a positive impact on the NBFCs resource position, thereby credit flows to SMEs and microfinance borrowers. RBI is proactive and progressing in a measured direction at a time when the economy is tail spinning into deeper recession

MHA asks stranded migrant workers to get back to work

Shaswati Das &
Prashant K. Nanda

NEW DELHI

The Union home ministry on Sunday provided relief to thousands of stranded migrant labourers across India, paving the way for them to return to their places of work within the city that are non-containment zones, if they were found to be asymptomatic. State borders will, however, remain closed, according to the ministry.

"In the event that migrants wish to return to their places of work within the state where they are located, they would be screened and those asymptomatic would be transported to



The movement of workers, however, is subject to strict screening and checks.

MANOJ DHAKA/HT

their respective places of work," the ministry said. However, "there shall be no movement of labour outside the state or Union territory where they are currently located".

The Union government has made it clear that all social distancing norms will continue to be observed when the migrants are being transported to their places of work and they will be

given proper food during their journey. Workers employed in industry, agriculture and construction, among other sectors, who have moved from their place of work to relief and shelter camps run by the state and central governments, could again be engaged in "industrial, manufacturing, construction, farming and MGNREGA works... since additional new activities outside containment zones have been permitted in the consolidated revised guidelines after 20 April", it said.

However, the movement of workers is subject to strict screening and checks. Besides, labourers housed in relief camps will first have to register with the local authorities. Skill mapping initiatives will also be

carried out on the basis of the suitability of their jobs.

The order, however, implies additional expenditure and use of resources by states. This is particularly so as it is now incumbent on states to organize thermal testing of migrants to clear asymptomatic cases. Experts, however, said the decision was poorly structured. "It looks like a half-thought through order from the Centre. You are asking for near universal opening of the rural economy...which will have huge costs and logistic involvement at district levels that will shift focus from managing the healthcare crisis," said K.R. Shyam Sundar, a labour economist.

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सरकार के उपाय नाकाफी

कोविड-19 को लेकर सरकार के राहत पैकेज के दायरे से अनौपचारिक क्षेत्र के बहुत से श्रमिक बाहर



प्रो. के आर
श्याम सुंदर

वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण का प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण पैकेज (पीएमजीकेपी) सिर्फ उस सीमा तक स्वागत योग्य है, जहां तक वह कोविड-19 के सामाजिक खतरे के कारण गरीब परिवारों के सामने आने वाली कठिनाइयों को दूर करेगा। इसमें टेक्स से जुड़ी राहतें भी हैं। आरबीआइ ने भी ब्याज दरें घटाने के साथ बैंकों को टर्म लोन की किस्में स्थगित करने की अनुमति दी है। सरकार और इसकी संस्थाओं की इसके लिए प्रशंसा की जानी चाहिए। वित्त मंत्री की 26 मार्च 2020 की घोषणा के अनुसार, भविष्य में निश्चित ही ऐसे और उपाय किए जाएंगे। यह और भी उपयुक्त होता अगर सरकार ने टेक्स, गरीबों, औपचारिक और अनौपचारिक कर्मियों, उद्योगों और व्यापार खासकर एमएसएमई और स्वास्थ्य संसाधनों के लिए एक ही बार में व्यापक उपाय किए होते, क्योंकि ये सभी एक-दूसरे से जुड़े हैं। आरबीआइ भी इसके समानांतर वित्तीय उपाय पेश कर सकता था।

पीरियॉडिक लेबर फोर्स के 2017-18 के सर्वे अनुसार, गैर कृषि क्षेत्र में नियमित मजदूर/वेतन वाले 72.8% श्रमिकों के पास औपचारिक रोजगार कॉन्ट्रैक्ट नहीं है, इनमें से लगभग 53% को सैवेंतिक छुट्टी नहीं मिलती और इनमें से 48% के पास कोई सामाजिक सुरक्षा नहीं है। यह जान लेना जरूरी है कि मैन्युफैक्चरिंग क्षेत्र के लगभग 85% (4.77 करोड़ श्रमिक), नॉन-मैन्युफैक्चरिंग के लगभग 95% (इसमें भवन निर्माण की हिस्सेदारी लगभग 93% है, जिनमें ज्यादातर अनौपचारिक श्रमिक हैं) और सेवा क्षेत्र के लगभग 79% श्रमिक अनौपचारिक हैं। शहरों में भवन निर्माण क्षेत्र के 70.4% श्रमिक अतिरिक्त हैं। संगठित फैक्टरी क्षेत्र में कुल कामगारों में से आधिकारिक रूप से 35% ठेका श्रमिक हैं।

इस तरह, हम देख सकते हैं कि अनौपचारिकता व्यापक पैमाने पर है और कुल गैर-कृषि श्रमिकों में से बड़ी संख्या में ऐसे हैं, जिनके पास किसी तरह की सुरक्षा नहीं है। शहरों में फेरी लगाने वाले अनौपचारिक कामगारों का एक और बड़ा वर्ग है। इसके अलावा लाखों लोग ऐसे हैं जो महामारी के जोखिम, राश्ट्रिय स्तर पर लोकडाउन और क्षेत्रीय सीमाओं और प्रतिबंधों के कारण प्रभावित हैं। विडंबना यह है कि ये वे लोग हैं जिन्हें काम और आय की जरूरत है, इसलिए इन पर बायर्स का खतरा अधिक है। हालांकि, केंद्र और कई राज्य सरकारों ने निजी क्षेत्र के नियोजकों से अपने कामगारों को नौकरी से न निकालने और उनका वेतन नहीं कटाने की अपील की है, लेकिन यह पैकेज की घोषणा की है, उसमें सबसे महत्वपूर्ण उपाय खाद्य सुरक्षा से जुड़ा हुआ है, जिसमें पांच किलो गेहूं या चावल और एक किलो क्षेत्रीय रूप से पसंद की जाने वाली दाल शामिल है।

वित्त मंत्री ने जो राहत पैकेज की घोषणा की है, उसमें सबसे महत्वपूर्ण उपाय खाद्य सुरक्षा से जुड़ा हुआ है, जिसमें पांच किलो गेहूं या चावल और एक किलो क्षेत्रीय रूप से पसंद की जाने वाली दाल शामिल है। सरकार का अनुमान है कि इससे 80 करोड़ लोगों को मदद मिलेगी। यह दुनिया में संभवतः अपनी तरह की सबसे साहसिक और सबसे बड़ी खाद्य

सुरक्षा है, लेकिन इसकी सफलता इसे लागू करने में समाहित है क्योंकि सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली (पीडीएस) का रिकॉर्ड बहुत प्रभावशाली नहीं है। इस उपाय में अनौपचारिक कामगार भी शामिल होंगे, क्योंकि उनमें ज्यादातर गरीब हैं और खाद्य सुरक्षा के दायरे में आते हैं।

पीएमजीकेपी में बिना किसी आधार के कहा गया है कि सिर्फ उन्हीं लोगों की नौकरी जाने का खतरा है जो 100 कर्मचारियों से कम को रोजगार देने वाले संस्थानों में काम करते हैं और जिनका वेतन 15,000 रुपये महीना तक है। इसी तर्क के आधार पर इसमें कर्मचारियों (15,000 रुपये महीना तक है) और नियोजकों दोनों के हिस्से के ईपीएफ अंशदान का भुगतान करने का प्रस्ताव है। यानी सरकार तीन महीने तक उनके वेतन के 24% के बराबर राशि उनके पीएफ खाते में जमा कराएगी। इसके लिए 5,000 करोड़ रुपये का प्रस्ताव किया गया है। सरकार का दावा है कि इस उपाय से कामगारों की नौकरी बचाने में मदद मिलेगी। सरकार इंडस्ट्रियल डिस्ट्रिक्ट्स एक्ट 1947 के चैप्टर V-बी और ईपीएफ एक्ट 1952 के बीच स्पष्ट रूप से उलझ गई है। पहला कानून 99 से अधिक कर्मचारियों वाली केवल पंजीकृत फैक्ट्रियों, खदानों और बागानों में लगातार एक साल काम करने वाले श्रमिकों को रोजगार सुरक्षा प्रदान करता है। इन फर्मों की श्रमिकों की छंटनी और उन्हें निकालने से पहले अनुमति लेनी पड़ती है। ईपीएफ एक्ट के तहत 15 हजार रुपये महीने से कम आय वाले कर्मियों नियोजता और कर्मचारी दोनों के अंशदान के लिए पात्र होते हैं। अगर सरकार 15 हजार रुपये से कम आय और 100 से कम कर्मचारियों वाले संस्थानों में ईपीएफ अंशदान का भुगतान करती है, तो नौकरी जाने के खतरे से मिलने वाली सुरक्षा बहुत मामूली होगी।

छठवें आर्थिक जनगणना, 2016 के अनुसार 4.53 करोड़ प्रतिष्ठानों में से सिर्फ 0.08 फीसदी में 100 या अधिक कर्मचारियों हैं। इन प्रतिष्ठानों में से 99.35 फीसदी में तो काम करने वालों की संख्या 20 से भी कम है। सरकार का तर्क है कि अगर कॉन्ट्रैक्ट टू कंपनी (सीटीसी), जिसमें नियोजता द्वारा दिया जाने वाला ईपीएफ अंशदान शामिल है, सरकार को के कारण घटती है तो 100 लोगों से कम को रोजगार देने वाले नियोजता (जो इंडस्ट्रियल डिस्ट्रिक्ट्स एक्ट के दायरे से बाहर होंगे) कर्मचारियों की छंटनी पर काम जोर देंगे। यहां महत्वपूर्ण है कि सरकार यह मान रही है कि इंडस्ट्रियल डिस्ट्रिक्ट्स एक्ट के चैप्टर V-बी के तहत नहीं आने वाले कामगारों के सामने 'नौकरी जाने का खतरा' है। इसलिए यह उपाय भ्रमित करता है। इसके लिए रबी गई 5,000 करोड़ रुपये की रकम बहुत ज्यादा हो सकती है, हालांकि संभव है कि सरकार ने अपने पास उपलब्ध आंकड़ों के आधार पर ऐसा किया है। स्वयं सहायता समूहों (एसएसजी) के लिए कोलेटरल लोन की सीमा बढ़ाना एक आकर्षक उपाय है। लेकिन अभी यह निश्चित नहीं है कि आर्थिक सुलती को देखते हुए वे कर्ज लेना चाहेंगे। ब्याज में छूट के साथ ही कर्ज की सीमा में बढ़ोतरी उन्हें आर्थिक सुलती के बावजूद कर्ज लेने के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर सकती है, लेकिन इसे सही मायने में राहत उपाय नहीं कहा जा सकता है।

पीएफ खाताधारक अपने ईपीएफ एकाउंट से शादी, शिक्षा, बीमारी, घर खरीदने और बेरोजगारी (हर मद में रकम निकालने की सीमा अलग



है) की अवस्था में सेवानिवृत्ति से पहले या सेवानिवृत्ति की उम्र के करीब एडवांस ले सकते हैं। अब सरकार ने महामारी को भी एक कारण के रूप में जोड़ दिया है। ईपीएफ अंशधारक अपने खाते में जमा कुल राशि का 75% या तीन महीने के वेतन के बराबर, दोनों में जो भी कम हो, बतौर एडवांस ले सकते हैं। यह रकम उन्हें दोबाब जमा नहीं करनी पड़ेगी। यह कामगारों के अदरूरतों कदम को प्रोत्साहित करता है। बल्कि सरकार तो हाल के कुछ वर्षों में इसे प्रोत्साहित करती रही है। अगर सरकार कर्मचारियों की नौकरी बचाना चाहती है तो उसे नियोजताओं, खासकर एमएसएमई को वेतन की मदद या लोन-ऑफ सब्सिडी देनी चाहिए। इसके अलावा न्यूनतम वेतन से कम आय वाले कर्मचारियों को डायरेक्ट बेनिफिट ट्रांसफर के जरिए पूरक राशि देनी चाहिए।

गैर-कृषि क्षेत्र में काम करने वाले अनेक श्रमिकों को इस राहत पैकेज का लाभ नहीं मिल पाएगा। इसमें ठेका कर्मचारी, आकस्मिक और अस्थायी श्रमिक और सालों से प्रशिक्षु के रूप में काम कर रहे कर्मचारी शामिल हैं, जिनका ईपीएफ खाता होने की संभावना बेहद कम है। अगर उनके ईपीएफ खाते हुए भी तो उनमें रकम बहुत कम होगी। इसलिए बिना ईपीएफ/ईएसआई आधार वाले कामगारों के लिए सरकार को टेम्परी यूनिवर्सल नॉन-फार्म अन्गैल्लेमेंट अलाउंस स्कीम (अस्थायी सार्वभौमिक गैर-कृषि बेरोजगारी भत्ता योजना) तैयार करनी चाहिए थी, जिसके लिए धन का इंतजाम टेक्स से होना चाहिए। ईपीएफ/ईएसआई कनेज वालों के लिए बेरोजगारी बीमा योजना लानी चाहिए थी। इसके साथ ही शहरों में अनौपचारिक क्षेत्र में काम करने वालों के लिए डायरेक्ट कैश बेनिफिट ट्रांसफर की व्यवस्था करनी चाहिए। इसमें फेरी वालों और दूसरे गरीब स्वरोजगार वालों को भी शामिल करना चाहिए। लेकिन सरकार ने सिर्फ चार श्रेणियों के लिए कैश ट्रांसफर की घोषणा की है- महिला जनधन खाताधारक, वरिष्ठ नागरिक, विधवा व दिव्यांग और किसान। इस तरह उसने बड़ी संख्या में शहरी अनौपचारिक कामगारों को छोड़ दिया है।

सरकार ने केंद्रस्थान कर्मचारियों के कल्याण के लिए उपकरण कोष

पैकेज सबके लिए नहीं: केंद्रस्थान सेक्टर के सिर्फ रजिस्टर्ड कर्मचारियों को मिल पाएगी मदद

(सेस फंड) के इस्तेमाल की बात कही है। इसे भी राहत पैकेज की श्रेणी में नहीं रखा जाना चाहिए, क्योंकि अगर ये कामगार केंद्रस्थान वर्कर्स वेलफेयर स्कीम के तहत पंजीकृत हैं तो वे फंड से अपने धन का ही इस्तेमाल करेंगे। यह इस कोष के सदुपयोग का अच्छा मौका है, लेकिन इसे किसी भी तरह से राहत उपाय नहीं कह सकते। कई राज्य सरकारों ने भी इन श्रमिकों के लिए राहत उपायों की घोषणा की है, लेकिन वहां भी रजिस्ट्रेशन की शर्त है।

बैसे यह अच्छा है कि सरकार ने मनरेगा के तहत काम करने वालों की दिहाड़ी 20 रुपये बढ़ा दी है, लेकिन बढ़ने के बाद भी दिहाड़ी 202 रुपये है। यह सबको पता है कि कृषि मजदूरों की तुलना में मनरेगा में काम करने वालों की दिहाड़ी बहुत कम है। सो-कैटेगरी के शहरों में कृषि मजदूरों की दैनिक मजदूरी 300 रुपये है। मनरेगा और कृषि मजदूरों की मजदूरी के बीच समानता की मांग पुरानी है, फिर भी इस पर अमल नहीं किया गया है। इससे भी ज्यादा गंभीर बात यह है कि हर परिवार को मनरेगा के तहत औसतन 45-50 दिनों का ही काम मिलता है। पिछले चार वर्षों से यही औसत बना हुआ है, हालांकि राज्यों के आधार पर इसमें अंतर हो सकता है। सरकार की ही रिपोर्ट बताती है कि 2019-20 के दौरान 7.77 करोड़ लोगों और 5.41 परिवारों को इस योजना के तहत काम मिला।

भारत का श्रम बाजार जिस तरह बंटा हुआ और अनौपचारिक है, उसे देखते हुए वित्त मंत्री के राहत पैकेज से लोगों को बेहद सीमित सामाजिक सुरक्षा मिल पाएगी। बेलाक, राज्य सरकारों असेमिडिड क्षेत्र के श्रमिकों के लिए राहत उपाय लेकर आ रही हैं। ये राष्ट्रीय योजना के पूरक के रूप में काम करेंगी।

(लेखक एमएसएलआरआई, जैविक स्कूल ऑफ मैनेजमेंट, जयपुरेडुपुर में प्रोफेसर हैं)

শ্রমিকেরা ঘরে ফিরুন, চায় না মালিক পক্ষও

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা

নয়াদিল্লি, ২১ এপ্রিল: যেখানে বাড়ি, সেই রাজ্য তেমন আগ্রহী নয় ঘরে ফেরাতে। যদি দ্রুত উৎপাদন শুরুর ছাড়পত্র মেলে, এই আশায় কাছছাড়া করতে চান না আপাতত মজুরি না-দেওয়া মালিক। আর আশ্রয় যে গ্রাণ শিবিরে, সেখানে থাকা-খাওয়া-চিকিৎসার অবস্থা তথৈবচ।

মূলত এই ব্রাহ্মপ্পর্শেই পরিযায়ী শ্রমিকদের অসহনীয় কষ্টের মুখে পড়তে হচ্ছে বলে অভিযোগ একাধিক ট্রেড ইউনিয়নের। ওই কর্মীরা এক বার বাড়ি পৌঁছলে, খুব তাড়াতাড়ি কাজের জায়গায় ফেরা তাদের পক্ষে কঠিন হবে বলে মানছেন বিশেষজ্ঞরাও। যে কারণে কারখানা কিংবা নির্মাণস্থলের কাছাকাছি ওই শ্রমিকদের রেখে দিতে অনেক মালিকও মরিয়া বলে মনে করছেন তাঁরা।

শ্রমিক সংগঠন এআইটিইউসি-র সাধারণ সম্পাদক অমরজিৎ কউরের দাবি, “ভিন্ রাজ্যে আটকে থাকা পত্নী, তীর্থযাত্রীদের ফিরিয়ে নিতে পদক্ষেপ করেছে (কিংবা নিসেন পক্ষে আগ্রহ দেখিয়েছে) উত্তরপ্রদেশ, উত্তরাখণ্ড-সহ বিভিন্ন রাজ্য। কিন্তু অন্য রাজ্যের গ্রাণশিবিরে আটকে থাকা পরিযায়ী শ্রমিকদের ফেরাতে আগ্রহ দেখায়নি প্রায় কোনও রাজ্য সরকারই। ঘরে ফেরানোর বন্দোবস্ত করেনি কেন্দ্রও।”

লকডাউনের জেরে কাজ যাওয়ায় হাতে টাকা নেই। ভাড়া না-মেগার আশঙ্কায় ঘরছাড়া করেছেন বাড়ির মালিকেরা। গ্রাণশিবিরে খাবার, পানীয় জল, এমনকি থাকার জায়গাও

বাড়ন্ত। অথচ স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক জানিয়েছে, আপাতত যে যেখানে রয়েছেন, সেই রাজ্য বা কেন্দ্রশাসিত অঞ্চলের সীমানা পার হওয়া যাবে না। শারীরিক পরীক্ষার পরে শর্ত এবং নিয়ম মেনে কাজ করতে হবে সেই রাজ্যেই।

এই সিদ্ধান্তের জন্য মালিক পক্ষের তরফে সরকারের উপরে চাপ তৈরি করা হয়েছে বলেও মনে করা হচ্ছে।

এক্সপ্লোরেশন-এর অর্থনীতির অধ্যাপক কে আর শ্যামসুন্দর স্পষ্ট বলছেন, “সত্তাব্য কর্মী-সমস্যা আঁচ করে শিল্পমহল প্রবল চাপ তৈরি করার কারণেই পরিযায়ী শ্রমিকদের বিষয়ে স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের ওই সিদ্ধান্ত।” সিটি-র তপন সেনের কথায়, “এখন শ্রমিকরা বাড়ি গেলে, উৎপাদন শুরুর অনুমতি মেলায় পরেও কর্মীর অভাবে কাজ শুরু হতে পারে। তাই কর্মীদের এখনই ফিরতে না-দেওয়ার জন্য মালিক পক্ষের তরফে চাপ তৈরির সম্ভাবনা উড়িয়ে দেওয়া যায় না।”

ইনসিটিটিউট অব ডেভেলপমেন্ট স্টাডিজ-কলকাতার অধিকর্তা অর্চিন চক্রবর্তীরও বক্তব্য, “কর্মীদের পকেটে টাকা নেই। ঘরে ফিরে কোনও ক্রমে খেয়ে-পারে বাঁচতে চান তাঁরা। পরে উৎপাদন পুরোদমে শুরু হলে এবং পকেটে টাকা জমালে, তবে কাজে ফেরার প্রশ্ন। ফলে তাঁরা ঘরে ফিরলে কর্মী সমস্যা হতেই পারে।” এই অবস্থায় শ্রমিক সংগঠনগুলির প্রশ্ন, অর্থনীতির স্বার্থে যদি শ্রমিকদের গেরে রাখা জরুরি হয়, তবে তাদের কেন দেওয়া হচ্ছে না যথেষ্ট খাবার-ওষুধ-থাকার জায়গা? কেনই বা করোনা পরীক্ষা না-করে গ্রাণ শিবিরে গা বেঁধাযেঁষি করে রাখা হচ্ছে তাদের?

गुजरात व पंजाब ने भी बढ़ाए काम के घंटे, कर्मचारियों की छंटनी पर आंध्र सरवत

सोमेश झा

नई दिल्ली, 21 अप्रैल

पंजाब और गुजरात ने फैक्टरियों में काम के घंटों में बढ़ोतरी की है, वहीं आंध्र प्रदेश ने लॉकडाउन की अवधि के दौरान ठेके के श्रमिकों की छंटनी को लेकर नियोजकों के लिए कड़े दिशानिर्देश जारी किए हैं।

गुजरात व पंजाब ने राजस्थान सरकार की राह पर चलते हुए विनिर्माण इकाइयों में 12 घंटे काम की अनुमति दे दी है। इसके पहले जहां पंजाब ने कर्मचारियों को अधिकतम 9 घंटे काम की अनुमति थी, गुजरात और राजस्थान में अधिकतम 8 घंटे काम करने का प्रावधान था।

बहरहाल राजस्थान और पंजाब की तरह गुजरात के कर्मचारियों को बढ़े हुए काम के

घंटों में काम करने पर सामान्य वेतन का दोगुना भुगतान नहीं किया जाएगा। गुजरात के श्रम विभाग ने 17 अप्रैल को जारी आदेश में कहा है, 'वेतन मौजूदा वेतन के अनुपात में होना चाहिए (उदाहरण के लिए अगर 8 घंटे का वेतन 80 रुपये है तो 12 घंटे का वेतन 120 रुपये होगा)।'।

यह प्रावधान 20 अप्रैल से शुरू होकर 3 महीने के लिए लागू होगा। गुजरात सरकार ने कहा है कि शिफ्ट इस तरह तय होनी चाहिए कि हर 6 घंटे में कर्मचारियों को आधे घंटे आराम दिया जाए।

राज्यों ने इस बदलाव के लिए विधायी मार्ग अपनाए बिना फैक्टरी अधिनियम 1948 के तहत दिए गए विशेष शक्तियों का इस्तेमाल किया है, जो सार्वजनिक आपातकाल की स्थिति के लिए

हैं। राज्य सरकारों का यह कदम इस रूप में देखा जा रहा है कि फैक्टरियों में उत्पादन सुनिश्चित हो सके और शारीरिक दूरी रखने के लिए कम कर्मचारियों के साथ काम करने पर भी उत्पादन प्रभावित न हो। श्रम कानून में यह बदलाव छूट पाने वाली श्रेणी में आने वाले सभी उद्योगों पर लागू होगा, जिनको केंद्र व राज्य सरकारों ने अधिसूचना जारी कर सुरक्षित तरीके से काम करने की अनुमति दी है। सूत्रों के मुताबिक महाराष्ट्र भी फैक्टरियों में काम के घंटे बढ़ाने पर विचार कर रहा है।

एक्सप्लोरआरआई जमशेदपुर के प्रोफेसर केआर श्याम सुंदर ने इन कदमों को अंतरराष्ट्रीय श्रम संगठन के मानकों का उल्लंघन करार दिया है। उन्होंने कहा कि जब कर्मचारियों को विभिन्न काम करने की जिम्मेदारी दी जाएगी तो

यह कदम उत्पादन के हिसाब से नुकसानदेह हो सकता है। उन्होंने कहा कि इसके कारण कर्मचारियों की थकान बढ़ेगी और दुर्घटनाएं ज्यादा होने की संभावना बनेगी।

मध्य प्रदेश जैसे कुछ राज्यों ने पहले ही अपने श्रम कानून में बदलाव कर एक दिन में 12 घंटे काम करने का प्रावधान कर दिया है। श्रम भारत के संविधान की समवर्ती सूची में आता है। राज्य अपने कानून बना सकते हैं, लेकिन इसके लिए उन्हें केंद्र से अनुमति लेनी होती है।

आंध्र प्रदेश में विशेष श्रम आयुक्त रेखा रानी ने 18 अप्रैल को आदेश जारी कर नियोजकों को निर्देश दिया है कि वे बिना किसी कटौती के अपने सभी कर्मचारियों को लॉकडाउन के दौरान पूरा भुगतान करें और ठेके पर काम करने वाले लोगों को न

हटाएं। आदेश में कहा गया है कि किसी भी कॉन्ट्रैक्ट या कैजुअल लेबर को हटाया जाना आदेश का उल्लंघन माना जाएगा और आपदा प्रबंधन अधिनियम के तहत यह दंडनीय होगा। कंपनियों द्वारा भुगतान न दिए जाने की शिकायत आने पर यह कदम उठाया गया है। केंद्रीय गृह मंत्रालय ने 29 मार्च के एक आदेश में कहा है कि लॉकडाउन अवधि के दौरान कंपनियों अपने कर्मचारियों का वेतन नहीं कम कर सकती हैं।

उद्योग के एक अधिकारी ने नाम न दिए जाने की शर्त पर कहा, 'उद्योगों के लिए यह चिंता की बड़ी बात है। एमएचए के दिशानिर्देश में समय का कोई जिक्र नहीं है कि कब तक उद्योगों को कर्मचारियों के वेतन का भुगतान करते रहना है।'



देशवर्दी में निजी फैक्टरियों को कम कर्मचारियों के साथ काम करने की अनुमति दी गई है। मंगलवार को असम के जनता भवन में आती राज्य सरकार की कर्मचारी, जहां मुख्य सचिव ने 21 अप्रैल से 30 प्रतिशत कर्मियों के साथ काम करने के आदेश दिए हैं फोटो-पीटीआई

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Gujarat, Punjab increase limit on work hours for factory employees

Wages will be in proportion of ₹80 for 8 hrs; AP asks firms to not lay off contract workers

SOMESH JHA
New Delhi, 21 April

Gujarat and Punjab have become the latest states to increase working hours for factories, even as Andhra Pradesh has issued a strict directive to employers to not lay off contract workers during the lockdown period.

The governments in Gujarat and Punjab followed the footsteps of the Rajasthan government and increased the working hours limit allowed in a day to 12 hours in manufacturing units. Earlier, while Punjab had allowed a maximum of 9 hours in a day per worker, Rajasthan and Gujarat had a provision for a maximum of 8 hours.

However, unlike Rajasthan and Punjab, workers in Gujarat will not be paid double the normal wages for the increased working hours.

"Wages shall be in proportion of the existing wages (e.g. if wages for eight hours are ₹80, then proportionate wages for 12 hours will be ₹120)," the Gujarat labour department said in an order dated April 17. These provisions will be valid for three months beginning April 20. The Gujarat government said shifts should be finalised in a way that workers be given rest of half-an-hour after six hours.

The states have invoked special powers under the Factories Act of



Unlike Rajasthan and Punjab, workers in Gujarat will not be paid double the normal wages for the increased working hours

1948, which could be used during a public emergency, to make these changes, without taking the legislative route.

The move by the state governments is seen as a way to ensure that to ensure production in factories doesn't take a hit with a limited workforce as social distancing measures have to be put in place during the operations. These changes to the labour law will be applicable for all the exempted categories of industries that will be allowed to work through notifications issued by the central and the state govern-

ments in the safe zones. According to sources, Maharashtra is also looking to raise the working hours in factories.

XLRI Jamshedpur professor K.R. Shyam Sundar termed these measures as violations of the International Labour Organisation's norms and said that the move could be counter-productive as it will lead to reduced efficiency in cases where workers need to perform multiple functions.

Some states such as Madhya Pradesh already have a provision for 12 hours work day in their labour

Need to open industry across zones: CII to govt

Industry should be allowed to operate across the country and not just outside 'red zones', the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) told the government on Tuesday, a day after some segments were allowed to resume work. The Home Ministry order classifies areas of large outbreak, or clusters with a significant spread of the virus, as 'hotspots' or red zones. The CII has pointed out the need to define hotspots clearly and publish the list on a real-time basis.

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY

laws. Labour falls under the concurrent list of the Constitution. The states can make their own legislation, but with the approval of the Central government.

In Andhra Pradesh, Special Commissioner of Labour Rekha Rani issued an order on April 18 directing the employers to pay salaries during the lockdown period to all employees without any deductions and not to "remove any contract or casual labour" which will be seen as a violation of the order and punishable under the Disaster Management Act.

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EDITION: Kolkata

PAGE: 2

K.R Shyam Sundar, XLRI on MHA orders on movement of stranded migrant workers

Kolkata: MHA's order on movement of stranded migrant workers within the States and Union Territories as a response to the tremendous pressure exerted by the industry and other bodies who have been lamenting of labour shortages and suffers from several infirmities. The circular is unclear and may cause confusion. The order stated skill mapping of migrant workers in the relief camps for the suitable deployment of their skills and Transporting the groups of migrant workers who wish to return to their places of work would be moved back after limited testing and those who are asymptomatic will be transported duly.

It looks like a half-thought through order from the centre. It is based on the unfounded assumption that intra-state movement is less risky than inter-state movement. Allocation of workers to "suitable places" is a big task apart from skill mapping and getting skill demands. All in all, this measure is a knee jerk reaction by the ministry and creates additional headaches for all stakeholders and this is not needed especially when the government needs all their energies to monitor the implications of substantial covid-liberalization in the rural areas and limited liberalization in the urban areas. The order implies additional expenditure and use of resources by states.

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PAGE: 6

Economists question curb on interstate migrant movement

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Kolkata: Labour economists have questioned the rationale behind the ministry of home affair's order that allows movement of migrant workers within the state but bars interstate movement. They say the order is a knee-jerk reaction to industry's lament on labour shortage that will do little to solve the festering crisis that migrant workforce are currently facing across the country.

"The order appears to be based on unfounded assumption that intrastate travel is less risky than inter-state movement. It talks of skill mapping of migrant workers in relief camps for suitable deployment and transporting groups of migrant workers who wish to return to their places of work after limited testing. Allocation of workers to suitable places is a big task apart from skill mapping and getting skill demands. This will only create additional headache for all stakeholders, something that isn't needed when all energies need to focus on monitoring the implications of substantial Covid-liberalization in rural areas and limited liberalization in urban areas," said labour economist K R Shyam Sundar, who teaches at XLRI.

There are around 6-7 crore



Stranded labourers from Malda district at a camp in Mumbai

migrant workers in India, mostly from West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and east Uttar Pradesh, engaged in various construction sites, including infrastructure and real estate projects. Post-Covid though, they have been branded infection carriers and have either been driven out of the host state or declined by the home state. The situation has put the spotlight on the Interstate Migrant Workmen's Act, 1976, that has been rarely implemented.

Praveen Jha, who teaches labour and development economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, too, questioned the logic of not allowing migrant labourers who have reached state borders from crossing over, pointing out that the demarcation was administrative and not medical. "Set up camps on the other side and keep the workforce quarantined for the specified period instead of barring their

entry. We have turned migrant labourers who keep our cities and towns moving to refugees in their own country. Many of these people are migrant agricultural workers worried about the fate of crops back home," said Jha.

They also felt the order was confusing and lacked clarity on key issues like providing food, shelter and subsistence money. "They need to be legitimately treated as unorganised workers and provided portable biometric ID cards. If they are not in relief centres, the local administration must provide temporary ration cards so that they get the rice/wheat and pulses till the Covid-led dislocation is over. And thirdly, they need to be provided cash relief by the Centre at the rate of minimum wages in MNRGA, i.e., Rs 202 per day or Rs 6,000 a month till this health emergency ends," Sundar suggested.

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RBI'S FUND INFUSION FOR NBFCs, BUT WILL BANKS OBLIGE?

The system has roughly Rs 7-trillion of excess liquidity that's parked at RBI's reverse repo window; Even though, the central bank seems well-intentioned, it's still somewhat underestimating the real problem i.e. inadequate availability of 'risk capital'

Kumar Shankar Roy



Need Of The Hour: Liquidity Regulation

RBI aims at improving liquidity for NBFCs/ MFIs
Relaxing NPA norms on accounts availing moratorium
Providing exemption to NBFCs on Commercial Real Estate (CRE) projects
Eased Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) requirement for banks
Special refinance via NABARD, SIDBI and NHB to help lenders meet their sectoral credit needs

In continuation with its earlier announcements, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unleashed a second round of measures on April 17, 2020, to boost the economy. In a series of steps, the RBI has aimed at improving liquidity for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)/ micro finance institutions (MFIs), relax non-performing assets (NPA) norms on accounts availing moratorium, provide exemption to NBFCs on Commercial Real Estate (CRE) projects (due to delay in date of commencement of commercial operations) and relaxed Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) requirement for banks. A targeted long-term repos operations (TLTRO) 2.0 has been announced for an amount up to Rs 500 billion (Rs 50,000 crore) with at least 50 per cent toward mid-sized NBFCs and MFIs. Special refinance facilities through NABARD, SIDBI and NHB to help lenders meet their sectoral credit needs have been provided as well. *Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) sector* All in all, RBI Governor Shaktinkanta Das has tried to unveil measures to ease liquidity and bank credit, to support the economy and enable normal functioning of markets, as part of the economic relief to offset the fall-out of coronavirus (covid-19) lockdown. However, don't you for a moment think that all this lead to the problems vanishing for NBFCs. The money availed by banks under TLTRO-1 got largely invested in PSUs and other top-tier corporates and not getting adequately channeled in NBFCs. Yes, the RBI makes lending money available for NBFCs, but banks don't seem in the mood for lending to all. Experts say that while RBI is treating the problem as inadequate availability of capital, actually the problem seems to be lack of risk capital in the system. Read on to know more.

FINANCE COLLECTION /

BANKNOTE

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As incomes dry up, workers dip into their EPF savings

Prashant K. Nanda
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NEW DELHI

More than 650,000 people have dug into their employee provident fund (EPF) savings to offset the income loss caused by the lockdown imposed to check the spread of the coronavirus.

As many as 30,000-35,000 people are withdrawing their provident fund savings on an average working day in April, an indication of the hardship the working class is facing.

Around ₹2,700 crore has already been withdrawn under the newly-facilitated pandemic rules, according to data from retirement fund manager Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

"This includes both money

withdrawn from the retirement fund corpus directly under EPFO and the corpus managed by company PF trusts. These are not just workers from small firms, but also those from blue-chip companies," said a government official, who declined to be named.

According to EPFO data, exempted PF trusts or those managed by companies under overarching rules of the retirement fund manager, have facilitated the withdrawal of almost ₹500 crore for their employees.

Neyveli Lignite Corp. in Cuddalore has seen its employees withdraw ₹84.4 crore of provident fund money, followed by Visakhapatnam Steel Plant in Vizag (₹40.9 crore), and NTPC Ltd (₹28 crore).

"The exempted provident



Around ₹2,700 crore has been withdrawn under the newly facilitated pandemic rules.

PRADEEP GAUR/MINT

fund trusts have risen to the occasion amid the covid-19 pandemic...some of the exempted establishments have done exemplary work," EPFO said in an email.

"The income loss is real. When businesses have suffered a massive setback

because of the lockdown, people are also bound to have lost income. However, we did not think that so many people will withdraw money under the new rules. The trend we are observing is not confined to one state or a few industrial locations. It is across states and

sectors," said the official mentioned above. In the next 10 days, cumulatively, at least a million subscribers may withdraw money from PF accounts, said the official.

"Construction, road transport, logistics, IT, manufacturing...all have lost businesses. The income loss is huge and people must have dipped into their PF money. It's not the ideal situation and will hamper

their retirement corpus, but when there is income loss, people will do whatever possible. It also shows that governments have not reached out to the working class the way it should have during a pandemic," said K.R. Shyamsundar, a labour

economist.

The Union government has allowed EPFO subscribers to withdraw up to 75% of their PF savings or three months of basic wages and dearness allowance, whichever is lower,

under a new rule promulgated to deal with hardships during the crisis.

"It's not just confined to Delhi. It is across India. It is time the government reaches out to the working

class which pays tax, helps industries gain productivity, but suffers most when situations turn bad. Their jobs are at stake and millions are facing a wage cut," said Shyamsundar, explaining that poverty is a real threat for millions of Indians.

As many as 35,000 people are withdrawing their PF savings on an average working day in April, shows EPFO data

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GOVT URGED TO GIVE INCOME SUPPORT TO WORKERS

Reminder: Not by bread alone

BASANT KUMAR MOHANTY

New Delhi: Nearly one crore workers are being given food by the government, NGOs and private employers across India, the government has told the Supreme Court, but academics and activists said the labourers needed income support apart from food.

Two labour economists told The Telegraph that most of these workers would have lost their jobs and the government should provide them the daily minimum wage throughout the lockdown period.

The government's claim came in an affidavit filed on April 7 by Gyanesh Kumar, additional secretary in the home ministry.

It said the government (Centre and state governments) was providing food to 54 lakh people, the NGOs to 30 lakh people and industry and employers to 15 lakh people.

The affidavit came in response to a petition from activist Harsh Mander, who had contended the government should pay the minimum wage and deliver free rations to the stranded migrant workers during the lockdown period.

The apex court later dismissed the case after the Centre said it was providing the workers food and taking measures to protect them from the coronavirus.

Labour economist Ravi Srivastava told this newspaper that these 99 lakh people who were being fed would only make up 30 to 40 per cent of the migrant workers stranded in places away

from their homes.

"Of those receiving food, the majority are out of job. They need protection in terms of income support," Srivastava said.

He said most migrant workers get an advance from the labour contractors and receive the balance pay after the completion of the work assigned to them.

During this lockdown period, the labour contractors would not be in touch with the workers, so the Centre must pay them their wages, Srivastava said.

The Centre has allowed the migrant workers to work within the states where they are now located but continues to ban inter-state travel.

"If a worker can travel from western Maharashtra to Konkan, why not allow them to travel from Mumbai to Andhra Pradesh with social-distancing measures?" Srivastava said.

"The central government has allowed some states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana to bring back their workers. The same should be allowed to all the states."

K.R. Shyam Sundar, professor of labour studies at the Xavier Institute of Management, Jamshedpur, said that opening feeding centres alone would not solve the problems of the migrant workers.

"The State's job is not only to feed. In these extraordinary times, the migrant workers and their families must be treated with dignity and provided with income support, which is equivalent to the minimum wage or poverty-line wage, whichever is higher," Sundar said.

Labour secretary Heeralal

Samariya had last week told a delegation of industry body Ficci that the government was trying to map the skills of the stranded workers so they could be offered jobs.

"We are issuing directions to the states to do a matching of skills and the jobs available, and offer jobs to the stranded workers," he said.

Mander, however, told this newspaper that it was not possible for a government in a free market economy to do such matching and offer jobs.

"This is not only an unimplementable idea, it still looks upon the workers as an economic resource — to be used opportunistically — rather than rights-holders who have the right to wage payments throughout the lockdown (in the way formal workers are being paid)," Mander said.

Another labour economist, who did not wish to be quoted, said the labour ministry lacked the wherewithal to find out which jobs were available in the market.

"This is not Lenin's Russia where all the jobs were under the State's control. In India, demand and supply decide job availability. There is no need for prospective employers to tell the government whether jobs are available," the economist said.

He said the workers had all these days sought jobs but were not provided any. Now they would prefer to return home to take care of themselves and their families.

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Jamshedpur: Educational institutions and alumni associations in the steel city have come forward to help needy rural and urban families with food in bulk amid the nationwide lockdown to contain the novel coronavirus pandemic.

From the start of this month, premier B-school XLRI has donated around 3,000 food packets, including rice, pulses, soy nuggets, cooking oil, salt and sugar, and in some cases wheat flour and soap, to families in rural and urban areas to poor families. Of the 3,000 packets, the Loyola Alumni Association has donated 1,200.

With skeletal staff on campus now, the B-school has managed to collect around Rs 12 lakh to help the needy during the pandemic. However, XLRI partnered with nonprofit organisations who have experience on the field for the distribution of food.

NGO Kalamandir and the Jamshedpur Jesuit Society have been distributing food in rural areas while Adarsh Seva Sansthan and People for Change are helping urban slums and transgenders receive food.

Educational hubs pitch in with food



Food packets ready for distribution at XLRI.
Telegraph picture

“We were told by the administration that there is need in rural areas too. People associated with us, including the faculty, alumni association and individuals have generously donated for the cause. However, we kept ourselves away from distribution as it is better done by organisations who work on the field,” said senior faculty member of XLRI, Madhukar Shukla.

Besides giving food packets to XLRI, the Loyola Alumni Association on its own has concentrated on children’s nutrition. The outfit has so far donated 3,760 half-litre packets of milk since the start of the month.

The distribution was being done twice a week but now on the request of the East Singhbhum DC Ravi Shankar Shukla it will be done thrice a week.

The Loyola Alumni Association has collected more than Rs 5 lakh from its members. Teachers of Loyola School have also agreed to donate a day’s salary for at least two months to support the cause.

“Nutrition is a key need for children between six months and three years, as the district administration said,” said Loyola Alumni Association vice-president Rajiv Talwar.

Last week, officials of private schools in Jamshedpur handed over a consignment of 7,200 packets of 500gm of a branded malt health drink to East Singhbhum district administration for poor pregnant and lactating women. About 16 schools in Jamshedpur had collected Rs 14.5 lakh for it and handed the consignment to the government officials at the Red Cross Bhavan.

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कोरोना के चलते रिजल्ट जारी नहीं कर रहा एक्सएलआरआई जमशेदपुर।
जमशेदपुर में दाखिला का अंतिम रिजल्ट मई में जारी होगा। संस्थान के प्रवक्ता सुनील वर्गीस ने बताया कि कोरोना के चलते संस्थान ने रिजल्ट को रोका हुआ है। इस परीक्षा के सारे चरण 15 मई के पहले ही खत्म हो गए थे। जैट इस साल 5 जनवरी को हुआ था, जिसमें देश भर के लगभग 80 हजार स्टूडेंट्स ने दाखिला लिया था। जैट का रिजल्ट जनवरी के अंतिम सप्ताह में आ गया था। 20 फरवरी से इसका इंटरव्यू और ग्रुप डिस्कशन का प्रोसेस शुरू हुआ, जो मार्च के पहले सप्ताह में खत्म हो गया था।

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IN PERSPECTIVE

Precarious workers: Left in the lurch

An insensitive government has left millions of unorganised workers to fend for themselves

KR SHYAM SUNDAR

Ever since the national lockdown announcement, the central and state governments have announced, with no much coordination, a slew of relief measures, often overlapping. While most of these are welcome, there are serious concerns and questions, including about their adequacy given the magnitude of the crisis playing out.

The biggest of the chief package should have been the daily wage curbers, the casual contract workers, migrant workers, domestic workers, street vendors, small traders, and the MSMDE. The Central Trade Union (CTU) appealed to the Prime Minister to extend measures like payments of 5,000 to workers registered under various welfare boards, and to arrest retrenchment, wage cuts, etc. For the additional few food grains, the Centre has not addressed them.

The Centre and a few states have issued "advisories" to private sector firms not to terminate permanent or non-permanent workers, given their absence in paid leave. They are well-meaning "advisories" but their implementation, at best during a very short tenure (say one or two months), depends on the willingness and more importantly, the "ability" of the firms. The Finance Minister has announced a 24% Employee Provident Fund subsidy for workers and employers in businesses employing below 100 workers and has also allowed workers to partially withdraw money from their own PF accounts. The former is inadequate, and the latter is a relief and will hurt the very objective of providing security for the future.

To tackle the formal heavy sector, around 30% of the total workers are contract workers and government agencies do not count casual, temporary, non-statutory trainees and even statutory trainees, who are prolonged in that position beyond their legal tenure, and we add these workers to the officially underemployed contract workers, the proportion may well reach 50% if not more. Most of these workers are unlikely to enjoy employment and/or income security as per the advisory of the government. Further, they will mostly not be covered by social security laws. Even if they are covered, the footloose nature of workers are less likely to belong to the PF and EPF accounts' and even if they do, their balance would not be high enough to provide the security under the PM's non-recoverable advance from EPF scheme.

While announcing the relief, the governments have funded target numbers ranging from lakhs to crores. But there are serious concerns here. The PM announced that 50 million construction workers would benefit from the cash hand while commencing, as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18 data, and trade unions put the number of workers in the sector at 60 million. This

means that there may be at least 10 million unregistered construction workers. Thus, we have further segmentation—registered and unregistered vulnerable workers.

Further, a sizable proportion of the construction workers will be migrant and even bonded workers as in the case of domestic and contract workers. Multiple identities or inter-sectarianism of workers that permeate the labour market. The 2011 Census counted 67 million migrant workers, and it must be higher now.

In the case of the migrant workers, there are two segments, those registered under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, due to rather stupid eligibility conditions for registration in it, and those unregistered ones. According to a statement in Parliament by the labour minister on November 23, 2019, under various schemes under the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008, 12.01 million workers were registered. This means that only 28% of the 2011-12 estimate of 300 million unorganised workers are covered. We thus see even coverage gaps within the segments of the unorganised sector, formally covered and left-out workers.

Finally, there may be defunct issues of the promised assistance, given the limited coverage of payment portals maintained by these workers. Timely of these workers, employment at any cost has always been the principal option, which is now being denied. Income flows are essential for them, which may not be provided either by the government or private firms in the current crisis context, not to mention their possible non-coverage under medical care.

Which is why many migrant workers prefer the risk getting the Covid-19 virus as they crowd transport spaces and accept the physical hardship of having to walk hundreds of miles to their towns and villages, perhaps only to survive even there. The stories of these workers on TV news channels show their desperate situation as well as the utter insensitivity on the part of the governments and policymakers.

Worse, these hapless migrant workers may be in for a further shock as press reports show that the MNRGA Scheme has been suspended in most states and in any case the Finance Minister's pithy wage hike will hardly alleviate the MNRGA workers' suffering, even if it was available. Further, the pandemic has led to 'wasteful' nature of the precarious, which is even more dangerous as both the host and origin states disown and distance them.

The segmentation and pervasive precarity in the labour market explains the current crisis. A few million workers are well-protected while millions of informal workers are left to fend for themselves. Thus, this crisis should be used to design a universal unemployment allowance scheme, a universal and comprehensive registry of unorganised workers (in place of database for other identity-based registers) with comprehensive social and comprehensive social protection for the norms of the International Labour Organisation.

(The author is a Professor at XLRI, Xavier School of Management)

ASHA, Anganwadi workers deserve pay, social security, not just applause

KR SHYAM SUNDAR

The government has been utilising the services of millions of frontline health workers to deal with Covid-19. Of them, the 'volunteers' employed under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) which has been in vogue since 1975, namely anganwadi workers (AW), anganwadi helpers (AH) and the Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers, employed under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in existence since 2005 (hereafter 'community health service workers, or CHSW), deserve special attention. According to the government, there are 1.33 million anganwadi workers and 1.05 million ASHA workers. Under their respective schemes, they provide multiple functions, such as child physical (including nutrition) and emotional and mental healthcare, maternal care, immunisation, family planning, reducing gender-based violence, etc.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, gave special training to the CHSW to help them provide a variety of services in the Covid-19 context, such as to spread safe practices, identifica-

tion of a virus suspect/contact, etc. The Telangana government has additionally asked the trained AWs to assess the psychological impact of lockdown on women, children and the aged. Thus, we see that they perform multiple valuable functions and are warriors in humanity's fight against Covid-19. Their work assumes vital importance as they have a strong and institutionalised community presence. However, their services are hardly mentioned, though they suffer from existential and identity crises. In fact, a PIL lodged in the Supreme Court seeks directions for protective measures for nurses, which is a welcome move as nurses are a highly exploited lot. The Supreme Court must suo motu include the CHSW also in its directions.

However, news reports reveal many bad experiences of these workers. For example, they have not only been subjected to undesirable treatment (like heckling, physical assaults) in some places, in others they have not been provided with adequate and fresh personal protective equipment like masks, gloves and sanitisers. In some places, they continue to use old-used masks or even their dupattas and pallu (end of the saree) as substitutes. They work for



long hours as the infection incidences rise, often sacrificing their family time. In some states, they did not receive their meagre income even during this tough period.

At the same time, press reports demonstrate unquestionably their selfless, untiring and invaluable frontline work, often risking infection as some of them have health deficiencies like diabetes, etc., which make them more vulnerable. While state governments have possibly settled the issues mentioned above arising out of the Covid-19 crisis, these workers suffer from some fundamental and long-pending labour market deficits that merit serious and considerate action by the government.

These workers are women who hail from low-income families, not well-educated, some of them widows, join the community health service at a young age and continue without any career prospects. There is a formal recruitment process and the ASHA workers receive rigorous training. Given the kind of extensive community health services they perform, it cannot be dismissed as unskilled work by any stretch of imagination.

However, the government has always maintained that since they are 'volunteers/honorary workers', it will only pay honoraria as determined from time to time. Their honorarium is a consolidated pay with no cost-of-living allowance and there are no structured guidelines for their periodic revision as would be the case in any kind of employment. Hence, in several regions, their honoraria are less than the minimum wages of unskilled workers.

Then, any rise in them is advertised by the ruling party as a large welfare measure. For example, the honoraria for AW and AH were revised from 3,000 to 4,500 and 1,500 to 2,250, respectively, in October 2018 – after seven years! The honoraria of these workers are shared between

the central and the state governments and hence their incomes show regional variations. The ASHA's compensation system is rather complex, comprising variable components that are linked to defined tasks (e.g. 100 for full immunisation; 50 for reporting child death; 1,000 for 42 contacts over 6-7 months of TB treatment). It is notable that the scheme-based workers work under poor conditions, are given meagre insurance cover and not entitled to social security.

The CHSW have conducted numerous struggles for many years on several demands and won several rights, like even the minor rise in their honoraria. The core demands are: fixed and higher wage, social security, the status of 'workers' and, since they work under government schemes, they should be treated as 'government employees'. These issues were discussed in the tripartite body, Indian Labour Conference (ILC) in 2015 and the Conference Committee in which government representatives were present endorsed all their demands. However, the government rejected them on specious grounds. Since they are volunteers and performing part-time work, they cannot be termed as workers nor

as government employees. On technical grounds, it declared that they are not eligible to cover under ESI and EPF schemes. They cannot be paid the minimum wages as they do not hold any civil post per the Supreme Court judgement in 1998. And since the government deems them to be 'volunteers', their trade union and collective bargaining rights issues do not exist.

The Finance Minister announced 50 lakh insurance cover for 90 days to health workers, including community health workers, and Maharashtra has announced a 25 lakh insurance cover for anganwadi workers. While these are laudable, if the applause by the political leaders is genuine, then a befitting reward to these precarious workers would be conferring 'workers' and 'government employees' status on them, with attendant benefits. It will not only uplift millions of families as these workers hail from low-income families, it will also enhance gender justice as they are women workers. Does the government have the heart and the will to do so, at least after having used their services extensively at a time of national crisis?

(The writer is Professor, XLRI, Xavier School of Management, Pune)