

**Demand to pay attention towards problem of rising rate of unemployment,
lower wages and rural-urban divide**

SHRIMATI JHARNA DAS BAIDYA (Tripura): Sir, I want to express my deep concern at inadequate employment opportunities for the masses in rural and urban areas.

Unemployment levels have been steadily rising and after several years of staying around 2 per cent to 3 per cent, the headline rate of unemployment reached 5 per cent in 2015 with youth unemployment being a very high 16 per cent. This rate of unemployment is the highest seen in India in, at least, the last 20 years.

The biggest new challenge facing India's policymakers and administrators is rapidly rising unemployment. This shortage of jobs is compounded by depressed wages, with 82 per cent of men and 92 per cent of women earning less than ₹ 10,000 per month.

It used to be said that India's problem is not unemployment but underemployment and low wages. States such as Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Karnataka are exceptions to the trend of rising unemployment nationally.

Another significant trend that the report highlights is the problem of low earnings. "Nationally, 67 per cent of households reported monthly earnings of up to ₹ 10,000 in 2015. In comparison, the minimum salary recommended by the Seventh Central Pay Commission (CPC) is ₹ 18,000 per month. This suggests that a large majority of Indians are not being paid what may be termed a living wage. The situation is worse in unorganized sector."

Such jobless growth is also creating a growing divide between the urban and rural areas and widening socio-economic inequalities in an unprecedented manner. I would, therefore, urge the Central Government to immediately take adequate measures to create employment opportunities in the country with adequate living wages. Thank you, Sir.

Demand to increase minimum wages to ₹ 18,000 per month

SHRI BINOY VISWAM (Kerala): Sir, I rise to urge the Government to take urgent steps to increase the minimum wages to ₹ 18,000 per month. The workers are the real builders of the nation. And, those who work in the unorganized sector do play a great role in making wealth for the nation. But, they are paid with meagre wages. In many cases, it is around a few hundreds per month. It has become impossible for millions of workers to survive with this poor wages. The prices of all essential commodities are sky-rocketing. The food inflation affects their lives badly. The purchasing capacity of rupee is falling down every day. A worker with three children needs minimum ₹ 25,000

per month, according to certain studies. It is in this background that the trade unions of the country are demanding ₹ 18,000 minimum in a month. By any yardstick, this is a genuine and modest demand from the side of the workers. This is one of the demands they raised in the country-wide general strike on 8th and 9th January. A Government which has any concern for the workers and the poor should heed to their voice. I believe, the concerned Ministers will take necessary steps in this regard.

Demand to enhance budgetary allocation and release of funds for drinking water projects in rural Meghalaya

SHRIMATI WANSUK SYIEM (Meghalaya): Sir, to achieve drinking water security and sustainability of drinking water sources in Meghalaya which are abundant, the Centre supports projects under the National Rural Drinking Water Programmes in rural habitats of the State.

Despite being one of the world's largest rain-fed regions, Meghalaya is handicapped because of hilly and non-porous terrain adversely affecting the charging of ground water formations, coupled with infrastructural backwardness and paucity of funds. The State suffers from sudden drop in allocation and release of Centre's share of funds both for implementation of new schemes but also in operation and maintenance of completed water supply schemes. Despite the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission Report for an increase in the share of States in the Centre's tax revenue pool from the earlier 32 per cent to 42 per cent, the budgetary allocations and corresponding releases under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation have dropped sharply to as low as ₹ 31.24 crores against the benchmark figures of ₹ 100 crores a year prior to 2014-15.

A large number of drinking water schemes, already sanctioned and accorded administrative approval by the State Government, are languishing due to paucity of adequate timely disbursements by the Centre. I urge upon the Centre to address this crucial issue concerning the welfare of the rural populace in Meghalaya at the earliest. Thank you.

Demand for urgent measures to deal with drought in Maharashtra

SHRI HUSAIN DALWAI (Maharashtra): Sir, the State of Maharashtra experiences huge variability in rainfall across various regions in the State. Major area of Maharashtra practices rain-fed farming. The net sown area under irrigation in the State of Maharashtra is about 16-18 per cent, which is even lower than the national average of 47.68 per cent.