

# Workers connect...

## **What do workers want - Universal Basic Income or a Job Guarantee Programme?**

In India, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 ensured a legal right to all adults in rural areas to access 100 days of manual work per family at a notified wage. This law relatively reduced distress migration from rural areas, increased the prevailing rural wage, set a work standard for rural works, equalised wage for men and women in rural areas thereby increasing family income. With the focus on NREGA declining for the subsequent government and the budgetary allocation for it stagnating along with non-implementation of the programme and delay in wage payments, rural distress has once again spilled over to the urban centres.

In addition, the urban centres have not been able to absorb either the existing urban working population or the ever flowing rural migrants in search of livelihood. However the condition in the rural areas with negligible opportunity for employment, migrants, even if they do not find stable employment in the urban centres, do not migrate back to their rural homes. What develops as an outcome, is they add themselves to the already existing army of self employed workforce in the urban centres exploiting their own labour and that of their families, surviving on the brink of absolute poverty. The now illustrious entrepreneurship model of a 'chaiwallah' or the 'pakodawallah' made famous by the honourable prime minister is the story of this model of survival. We see these 'successful' entrepreneurs all around us – the vegetable vendor from Bengal in Delhi who brings vegetables to our doorstep, the golgappa boy from Banaras who dropped out of school when his father died to feed us the most delicious golgappas at the street corner of the local market, and of course the oriya plumber who sits at the local hardware shop all day waiting for phone calls from the local flats for repair jobs. The funny twist of fate is that if any of them are offered a stable and secure wage employment, they would all

abandon their roaring profitable business and their freedom and choose the 'bonded' life of a waged worker. This is the real world of surplus labour. Surplus labour is invisible in an economy because everyone ends up doing something to stay and keep their families alive. This has been glorified by many as self-employment, some as entrepreneurship and some as path to women's empowerment. This glorification is capitalism's way of keeping its pool of surplus labour so that wages remain suppressed. As wage labour demand higher wages, there is always this pool of self employed who are willing to offer their labour, at a lower rate which not just keeps the wage at the minimum, it also keeps the minimum at bare subsistence.

But what if this huge pool of surplus labour was offered a choice between a job guarantee and a Universal Basic Income?

### **Universal Basic Income – Sheep in Wolfskin**

Universal basic income is a government-guaranteed minimum income that is paid out to a citizen to cover the basic cost of living and provide financial security. There may be specified criteria for eligibility of this payout but it is universal within that group, irrespective of whether the person is employed or not.

Universal Basic Income is not a very new concept. In a speech in 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. said:



" ... We are demanding an emergency program to provide employment for everyone in need of a job, or if a work program is impractical, a guaranteed annual income at levels that

sustain life in decent circumstances. It is now incontestable that the wealth and resources of the United States make the elimination of poverty absolutely practical."

Martin Luther King Jr. fought racism, but unfortunately, not capitalism. Thus his

proposition for guaranteed income only looked at reducing economic inequality between the coloured people and the whites in the US. He was willing to accept that jobs will be lost and not created with advancement of technology and capitalism and hence the proposal for the guaranteed income. The guaranteed income was not just meant to eliminate poverty, it was to make the poor, consumers to fuel capitalist growth.

In six decades since King Jr., the concept of universal basic income (UBI) has not progressed much. It still remains an integral element of sustaining capitalism. It is proposed as a welfare measure for elimination of poverty, but what it is meant to achieve is to (i) increase market access of people by providing liquid cash in the hands of the poor so they can afford small packets of toothpaste, small packets of jam and ketchup, detergents, even cheap packaged junk food, visit private doctors, send their kids to private schools to keep these industries afloat; (ii) dismantle public provision of goods and services; and (iii) more importantly, avoid riots and strife in a chaotic desperate society. It is meant to be a safety valve in a capitalist society. This is the other side of the glorification of entrepreneurship in a capitalist society.

**Social Security Net:** The concept of UBI also needs to be looked at in the context of where it is being proposed to be rolled out – a rich country with some poor people or a poor country with some very rich people. Germany, like other countries earlier, recently initiated a 3 year trial as a part of which 120 people will receive €1,200 each month – an amount just above their poverty line – and researchers will compare their experience with 1380 others who shall not receive this amount. What is important to note here is that the 120 persons who are being provided the UBI are being paid an amount that is just above the poverty line. This implies that these 120 individuals are in a state that first of all they should not be in, in one of the richest countries in the world. The cash payout made to these 120 persons should have been part of the social security net through which they should not have fallen. Thus what is essential is not the cash handout that keeps them just above the poverty line, but a non-cash social security net that provides basic

necessities to people below a certain income level. Replacing a social security net such as unemployment benefit in the global north, or the food ration through the public distribution system as in our country, with a cash outlay does not necessarily lift a certain section of the population out of poverty.

**Public Provisioning and Corruption:** People who came up with these ideas of public health system, public education system, public transport, public distribution system were neither complete idiots nor crazies who had no idea what they were doing as governments today across the world would like us to believe. These systems are portrayed as dens of bureaucratism and corruption that must be eliminated to ensure a clean world. But these were meant for the benefit of the many, and not just the few. This was an alternate model to the model of concentration of wealth for the few.

When a government hospital refuses treatment for a critically ill patient, the patient is moved to a private hospital. The doctor denying treatment is termed a corrupt doctor and it seems the story ends there. It is only the beginning of another story where this doctor receives a payout from the private hospital where the patient is recommended to go. The doctor is undoubtedly a part of a corrupt system, but the private hospital is the architect of the corrupt system. Corrupting all that is for the many, schools, hospitals, even government administration, is core to the profit making philosophy of capitalism. This also extends to the repeated effort of government to replace hot cooked meals at anganwadis with biscuit packets. Thus undermining public services is not just done by capital but also by the capitalist state.

With the most powerful attack launched on the idea of collective welfare since the 1990s, we have today reached a point where we can see no alternative model of development. The alternatives have been successfully discredited and destroyed. In such a vacuum of possibilities, it is difficult for us to see the wolf in the sheepskin.

**Inequality:** The 2019 Oxfam report on inequality showed that India's top 10% holds 77.4% of

the total national wealth, while bottom 60% population holds only 4.8% of the national wealth. UBI, if ever to be proposed in a country like ours, would mean providing a certain sum of cash to this over 60% of the population. The quantum of money that will be required to hand out this bare minimum cash outlay for all in this category, it would mean this cash dole will replace every other public provisioning – for health, education, food, housing, transport, given the budgetary constraint. So the larger question that UBI brings to the table is should UBI replace every government responsibility for people’s welfare?

**Public Goods:** Finally, we come to the question of why we need non-cash public goods and services? And can private players successfully replace the government in the provision of public goods? In economics, a public good is defined as a good or service which no person can be excluded from, and its consumption by one person does not reduce its availability for others (like mother’s love). Let us first take the simple example of street lights. When a certain street is lighted, the lights are there for all who walk that street and not just who live on that street, and it does not switch off when 100 or 200 people have walked that street to prevent others from using it. The street lights not just make it easier to navigate that street it also ensures safety of an entire community. The value of both of these are immeasurable. If we try to put a price for its provision no one will be willing to pay as everyone can claim they do not use that street and will know that it does not matter whether they pay or not, the light will still be there. As a consequence, the provider of this good cannot make profit out of this. Hence no private player will be willing to provide this good that brings safety to a community as it does not bring profit. So how can this be priced? Hence street lights are provided by local government and its cost is derived from the budget allocation.

This also applies to nutrition, health, education, mobility, whose value, like safety, is immeasurable, and therefore cannot be relied upon the private sector to provide for all. The value derived from these goods and services is far more than can be ascribed to them and is even higher than the price at which

it can be delivered. If delivered by the private sector, to make profit, they will put a price on it, which will be affordable for a few and not for many. This will lead to exclusion and this exclusion will lead to expanding inequality. What this exclusion will also mean is a country with malnourished children with low immunity, who will lack education and capacity to learn skills, undernourished mothers who will give birth to undernourished children, some of who may not even survive till adulthood. What we have achieved in the decades following independence despite the crumbling public health, public education, public employment, public transport systems is incremental improvement in our intergenerational health and education parameters, of improved quality of life for all, even if very slowly. What privatisation and jobless growth will together bring is a drastic decline of all this.



**Dignity:** And finally, people on the brink of poverty may accept a guaranteed income to stay afloat, just like they ‘opt’ for self exploitation. This cannot be represented as a choice they have voluntarily made. A voluntary choice can only be made when more than one option is available. When workers accept a ‘basic income’, it is not indicative of their preference for it. It is only a choice they exercise between hunger and this basic income. Question is do they stop looking for employment when they start receiving this basic income – NO. Even the policymakers who design basic income models claim that it helps workers to choose jobs better. This clearly indicates that workers do not want dole, but always prefer a safe and secure waged employment with regular working hours, weekly off, basic healthcare, and minimal retirement benefit.

This brings us to the critical issue of dignity. Are we supposed to assume that since a group

of workers are extremely poor, they do not have the right to a life with dignity? Does the constitution of this country not make us all equal and guarantee all of us the same life of dignity? The limited employment guarantee law in our country provided workers for the first time in rural areas a sense of dignity.

Interaction with women among the working poor often reveals that cash is controlled by men in patriarchal societies and hence is used according to their priorities, while if government provided food coupons it ensures nutritional standard of the family, increased outlay for public health services, public education, public distribution system, public transport system, it would improve the overall condition of the society by providing a social security net that will keep them afloat at all times without losing their dignity.

## **Policy News**

### **Parliamentary standing committee on Labour to examine impact of Ayushman Bharat, Aarogya Setu app**

**27 August 2020:** The standing committee on labour is scrutinising different programs of the Centre and their impact on workers with a particular emphasis on inter-state migrants, informal and unorganised sector workers during the lockdown. The committee has invited health department to understand the impact of Ayushman Bharat and Aarogya Setu app. The committee is scheduled to submit a report to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for discussion during the monsoon session of the Parliament.

### **Karnataka: Government to build transit homes for migrant workers**

**24 August 2020:** Inspired by the success of 'Apna Ghar' scheme of Kerala government which provides shelter to migrant workers at nominal rates, Karnataka government has decided to build 4 transit homes for the migrant workers in Bengaluru, each with a capacity to accommodate at least 3,000 workers. Aimed at providing better living conditions for migrant workers each shelter home would be built with a budget of Rs. 50 crores which will have kitchens for the workers to cook their own meals.

### **ESIC to offer 50% of salary as unemployment benefit to workers who lost their jobs due to lockdown**

**20 August 2020:** Employee State Insurance Corporation has announced that it will pay 50% of last three months to those workers who were in employment for a minimum period of two years immediately before his/ her unemployment and should have contributed for not less than 78 days in the contribution period (six months) immediately preceding to unemployment, and minimum 78 days in one of the remaining three contribution periods in two years prior to unemployment. The scheme will be operated under the Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana and benefit over 4 million workers.

### **Delhi: Delhi Metro Rail Corporation slashes workers' perk and allowances by 50%**

**19 August 2020:** Facing adverse financial condition due to non-operation of metro services amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has decided to reduce perks and allowances of its workers by 50%. Starting August 2020, perks and allowances shall be payable at 15.75% of the basic pay and all sanctions of fresh advances, house building advance, multipurpose advance, laptop advance, festival advance and others have been put on hold till further orders.

### **Jharkhand: Government launches employment guarantee scheme for unskilled workers in urban areas**

**15 August 2020:** Jharkhand government has launched an employment guarantee scheme like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to ensure that people migrating back to the state due to COVID-19 induced lockdown do not go hungry. The state urban development department will be responsible for executing the scheme. Under the scheme persons over 18 years of age and living in the area since April 1, 2015 can apply either online or through their ward level officers under the Mukhyamantri SHRAMIK (Shahri Rozgar Manjuri For Kamgar) Yojna, to avail work for 100 days a year within 15 days of receiving an application. Government will provide an unemployment allowance to the applicant if it fails to provide employment

within the stipulated time.

### **Government scraps Handloom and Handicrafts Boards**

**07 August 2020:** The Union Ministry of Textile issued two notifications on 27 July 2020 abolishing the All India Handicrafts Board and the All India Handloom Board. The Boards were formed with the vision to aid the government to form policies for the overall development of the sector. The move will adversely affect nearly 2.8 million households in India, mostly rural, which are associated with handloom work in India.

### **Himachal Pradesh: Government to appoint multi-task workers on 10-month fixed term contracts**

**04 August 2020:** The Himachal Pradesh government has finalised the policy to appoint 'part time multi-task workers' responsible for carrying out daily works as opening and closing of schools, cleaning of premises, distributing the post and arrangement of drinking water on contractual basis with no claim for regularization. The workers will be paid consolidated amount of Rs. 5,625 per month for 10 months as honorarium in an academic year. Appointments would be made based on 'merit' decided by a marking system. Marks would be awarded to the candidates for parameters like distance from school, educational qualification, widows/persons living in extreme indigent condition, families who have donated land for the school, candidates belonging to ST/SC/OBC/BPL and unemployed families.

## **Legal News**

### **Madras High Court directs Tamil Nadu government to survey all migrant workers**

**28 August 2020:** A division bench of Justices MM Sundresh and R Hemalatha has directed the Tamil Nadu government to undertake an extensive survey to identify, register and enlist all unorganised manual workers to ensure that they benefit from various government schemes. The court also directed the State to ensure that, those who utilise the services of these workers, contribute to welfare boards constituted for them. The court has asked the government to complete the exercise within

12 weeks.

### **Karnataka High Court seeks government's response on paid quarantine leave for workers**

**6 August 2020:** A division bench of Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice Ashok S Kinagi has sought government's response in a Public Interest Litigation filed by the All India Trade Union Congress regarding paid quarantine leave for daily wage workers who are not registered with ESIC and cannot afford undergo the mandatory 14-day isolation upon being tested COVID-19 positive. The bench has asked the government to reply with the economic cost of such a scheme and how it could be implemented.

### **Rajasthan: Labour department issues notices to construction companies for failure to pay labour cess**

**4 August 2020:** The Rajasthan state labour department has issued notices to construction companies to the tune of Rs. 1,000 crores for failure to pay labour cess under the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996. The act mandates construction companies to pay 1% of the construction cost of a project as labour cess within 30 days of the completion of the project. Failure to pay the cess attracts an annual interest penalty of 24%. The notices issued in some cases date back to non-compliance since 2015.

### **Supreme Court issues notice to Gujarat government over amendment cancelling overtime pay**

**4 August 2020:** A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and KM Joseph has issued notice to the Gujarat government over the notification issued by the Gujarat Labour and Employment Department on 17 April 2020, which grants exemption to all factories in Gujarat from provisions of the factories Act, 1948 relating to daily working hours, weekly working hours, intervals for rest and spread-overs of adult workers, and even from the duty to pay overtime wages at double rates as fixed under section 59 of the Act. The notification has been challenged by the Gujarat Mazdoor Sabha.

## Collective Bargaining

### **West Bengal: Tea garden workers unite to oppose management imposed lockdown**

**23 August 2020:** Over thousands of tea garden workers in the Longview Tea Estate in Kurseong sub-division of Darjeeling district went on hunger strike after the management declared suspension of work on 21 August 2020. Management's decision to suspend work and lock down the tea garden is aimed at crushing workers' agitation, demanding payment of arrear wages, provident fund and festive bonus which have been long overdue.

### **Central Trade Unions come together to demand withdrawal of draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) 2020 notification**

**20 August 2020:** The Joint Trade Union Committee comprising of 10 Central Trade Union organisations INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, LPF and UTUC have written to the prime minister demanding withdrawal of draft Environmental Impact Assessment, 2020 which allow for mining of coal and other minerals in ecologically sensitive areas and are in contravention to country's commitment to International Climate Change Treaty.

### **Frontline health workers strike against meagre wages and harassment, Police registers FIR**

**7 August 2020:** Over 6 lakh Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers went on 2-day strike against continued harassment, underpayment, lack of protection from infection and precarious nature of their jobs on 7 August 2020 across the country. However, in the national capital the Police registered a FIR against the Corona warriors for breaking social distancing norms and lockdown protocols by assembling en masse at Jantar Mantar. Trade Unions have urged the government to take back the FIR.

## Workplace Safety Watch

### **Construction**

On 15 Aug., 2 workers Karn Sahoo and Saddam Khan were killed while another worker Vinod Kuma survived grave injuries after wall of an

under construction building collapsed on them. Police have registered a FIR under IPC 304A.

Suraiya Begam (45) and Giano Devi (55) were killed on 3 Aug., as a mound they were digging caved in on them in Karnal, Haryana. The mound was being dug for the construction of a wedding hall under MGNREGA, 2 other workers got severely injured. Police have registered an FIR under sections 304 A, 336 and 337 of the Indian Penal Code against Sonia Rani and Sethpal the MGNREGA mitra responsible for the project for not following safety measures.

On 1 Aug., Rajesh Gautam (19) was killed after iron rings, weighing 400kg, fell on him from a crane at a metal fabricating company as they were not fastened properly with a belt in Rabale MIDC, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra. The Police have arrested Preetpal Singh Saini (25) manager of the company for negligence and not providing workers with safety equipment.

### **Manufacturing**

On 21 Aug., a fire broke out at the underground hydel power plant at Srisailam Hydel power project killing 9 workers - Deputy Engineer Srinivas Goud, Assistant Engineers Sundar Naik, Venkatrao, Mohan Kumar, Uzma Fatima, Plant Attendant Rambabu, Junior Plant Attendant Kiran, Palwancha, Amaron Battery Company staff Vinesh Kumar and Mahesh Kumar. 17 workers were on the night shift when the accident happened. Chief Minister has announced an ex-gratia of Rs. 50 lakh each to the family of the deceased and employment to one person in the family on compassionate grounds.

On 18 Aug., Sandeep Kushwaha (28) and Brijesh Maurya (25) were killed while Pramod Mishra (35), Dilip Gupta (28), Umesh Kushwaha (21), Mohammed Mohsin Altaf Ansari (31) got grievously injured after the reactor at Nandolia Organic Chemicals plant, located in the Plot 141 of Tarapur Chemical Zone, Maharashtra explored late evening. Police have registered a case of accidental death.

On 14 Aug., Laxman Ratede (25) was found dead in the unit owned by Seetaben Patel on Plot 86 of Sonal Industries in Pandesara, Maharashtra. Post-mortem has revealed that Laxman was killed of electrocution. The police

have not registered any case in the matter.

On 10 Aug., Sandeep Kumar (27) was killed in the fire that gutted the pen factory in NOIDA sector 63 where he was employed as a security guard.

Lakshmana Murthy (62) was killed of burn injuries on 6 Aug., while two other were grievously injured due to an explosion in the boiler unit of SPY Agro Industries in Nadyal, Andhra Pradesh. This was the second explosion in the factory. On 27 June an explosion in the factory had resulted in the death of 3 worker including a manager.

On 2 Aug., 5 workers Mangesh Prabhakar Naukarkar (21), Liladhar Wamanrao Shende (42), Vasudeo Ladi (30), Sachin Prakash Waghmare (24) and Prafull Pandurang Moon (25) were killed and several others were injured after the bio-digester exploded at the Manas Agro Industries and Infrastructure Ltd at Bela, Maharashtra. The police have not filed any complaint so far and the management has claimed that the workers were employed through a contractor to perform 'outsourced work'.

On 1 Aug., a 70 tonne crane collapsed during trail run crushing 10 workers - R.Venkat Rao, Chaitanya, Ramu, PV Ratnam, P Naga Demudu, Sathyaraj, Shivakumar, Bhaskar, Prasad and Jagan to death at Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) while 4 were permanent workers of HSL 6 other workers were contract workers employed by Greenfields Corporation, Lead Engineers and Squad 7. Taking cognizance of the matter Defence Minister has ordered a Departmental Enquiry in the matter to establish the reasons for the mishap.

### **Sanitation**

On 18 Aug., Des Raj (48) and Gurbachan (30) were killed of asphyxiation when they went to clean a septic tank in Pandher village, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.

On 9 Aug., 4 sanitation workers were killed of asphyxiation in Deoghar district of Jharkhand while they were cleaning the septic tank of a private house. Govind Manjhi (53) and Tilu Murmu (24) -- got into the tank in the morning when they failed to respond to several calls Brajesh Barnwal (54) and Mithilesh Barnwal (43)

brothers of the house owner entered the septic tank and fell unconscious. Thereafter, 2 sons of Govind Manjhi both in their early 20s entered the tank and they too suffocated because of the toxic gases. All 6 people entered the tank without any safety equipment.

### **Others**

On 7 Aug., Line helper Pundalik Jalmi (45), assistant linesman wireman Sameer Parab(42) and line helper Sagun Gawas (28), employees of Goa Electricity department were killed after being crushed by power poles after the truck carrying them and the power poles lost balance. Driver of the truck and 2 other workers accompanying him in the driver's cabin survived grave injuries.

On 2 Aug., 2 farm workers B. Mallika (30) and T. Rama (38) transplanting paddy in field in Konijerla, Hyderabad drowned after they fell in a 25 feet deep well while they had gone to fetch water to wash their tiffin box after lunch. The well had makeshift steps which collapsed under the weight of the women. 3 other workers were rescued by a local who heard their screams and used her saree as a rope to rescue them.

## **News From Around the World**

### **Qatar: Government scraps Kafala system, raises minimum wages for migrant workers**

31 August 2020: Qatar's Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs has finally promulgated the abolition of draconian Kafala system that required workers to take NOC from employers before switching jobs. Emir of Qatar in October 2019 has announced that the system will be done away with. In the times of pandemic triggered slowdown and reverse migration the government has also announced a 25 % raise in minimum wage to 1,000 riyals to lure migrant workers to stay on as the country braces for the FIFA World Cup 2022. There are over 6,30,000 Indian workers in Qatar who are set to benefit from this move.

### **Bangladesh: Government constitutes Tk700 crore fund for rehabilitation of migrant workers**

24 August 2020: The Government of

Bangladesh has constituted a Tk700 crore fund for rehabilitation and re-employment of migrant workers who have returned home after losing their jobs overseas, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since 1 April 2020, more than 78,000 Bangladeshis have returned home from 26 countries. Under the fund, the affected Bangladeshi workers will get investment credit at 4% interest and the family of each expatriate Bangladesh worker, who have passed away due to Covid-19 infection, will get Tk3 lakh ex-gratia.

### ***Kenya: Court declares health workers' strike illegal, orders them to return to work***

20 August 2020: The Employment and Labour Court in Kisumu issued conservatory orders barring striking healthcare workers from carrying on with their industrial action which had been going on for past 18-days. Members of Kenya Medical Practitioners Pharmacists and Dentist Union, Kenya National Union of Nurses, Kenya Union of Clinical Officers and Kenya National Union of Laboratory Technicians went on strike on 2 August 2020 against delay in payment of wages and poor management of health facilities in Homa Bay county by the local government. The union has been demanding that the Central government take over the management of health facilities in the area.

### ***Jordan: Government promulgates law to end gender based wage discrimination***

18 August 2020: The Parliament of Jordan has amended Labour Law No. (8) of 1996 to prohibit unequal pay based on gender. The law now defines "wage discrimination" as inequality between workers in remuneration for work of equal value due to discrimination based on gender. Employers found guilty of wage discrimination will be subject to a fine between 500 and 1,000 Jordanian dinars. In addition, the articles related to vacation days have been amended to provide for paternity leave of three days for fathers upon the birth of a child. Studies show that men earn 41 % more than women in the private sector and 28% more in the public sector.

### ***Belarus: Workers shut plants against police violence and corruption in elections***

13 August 2020: Thousands of workers struck

work and shut down plants over brutal police violence against people protesting against corruption in recent precedential elections in the country. Workers at state-owned Belarusian Automobile Plant (BelAZ), Minsk Automobile Plant (MAZ) and Minsk Tractor Works (MTZ) went on strike bringing manufacturing in the country to a standstill demanding fair elections and action against police officers who unleashed force against peaceful protestors demanding that elections be fair and transparent.

### ***USA: California Labour Commissioner sues Uber and Lyft for wage theft***

6 August 2020: California state labour commissioner has filed a suit against taxi companies Uber and Lyft for wrongly classifying drivers as 'independent contractors' to deny them minimum wages, leave pay and health benefits as per law. A UC Berkeley Labour Center report in May estimated that if the firms had treated their drivers as employees between 2014 and 2019, Uber and Lyft would have contributed a combined \$413 million.

The companies have however, put together a \$30 million fund to fight the law suit and campaign against AB-5 the newly promulgated law in California which mandates gig work providing companies to classify gig-worker as employees and pay them minimum wages, leave pay, health benefits and contribute towards unemployment benefits.

### ***Indonesia: Government launches direct cash transfer scheme for workers hit by pandemic***

06 August 2020: The Indonesian government has launched a direct cash transfer scheme for workers affected due to COVID-19 triggered lockdown and subsequent dipping of the economy. The scheme aimed at creating purchasing power amid workers who lost their livelihood cost the exchequer \$2.15 billion and benefit over 14 million workers. Starting Septemeber the government will transfer \$41 for the next 4 months to the accounts of all those workers whose monthly salary is below \$343 per month.