

Save the transport sector- Enact Social security Act for the Unorganized Transport Workers

Participate & Make success Challo Delhi-April-05-2023

Dear Brother/Sister,

We all know that the entire Transport sector either in Public Sector or in private sector both passenger and goods is thrown into a serious financial crisis due to the retrograde policies of the Government of India. It is the time to rise to the occasion, get united and demonstrate our strength to mount pressure on the Government to reverse the retrograde policies. All India Road transport Workers' Federation appeals to all the Road Transport Workers to march to Delhi on 05th April-2023.

The abnormal enhancement of Excise duty and other taxes leading to high prices of Diesel, ever increasing Insurance premium and Toll taxes, the multiple time increase of Transport service charges have together ruined the industry. The expenditure has gone up so high and the income did not match with it. Good number vehicle owners have left the field. Thousands of Trucks, Auto Rickshaws, Private Buses and Taxis are seized by the Finance Companies for default of the EMIs.

Diesel prices: In the year 2020 the crude oil prices in the international market has fallen down to the lowest level of 20 USD per barrel. But the Government of India instead of reducing the prices has enhanced the excise duty of Rs 16 per liter on Diesel within 3 months between March and June 2020. That too the entire world was crumbled by COVID 19. No government in the world has burdened the people during the pandemic period. The Modi Government did it. Further, the cost of refining of crude oil is only Rs. 2 in India. As of now the crude oil prices in the international market is around 78 USD. One Barrel of oil contains 159 liters. The exchange rate is Rs.81.57. That means 1 liter of crude oil costs Rs.40.15. Add Rs. 2 for refining charges. Then the actual rate should be Rs.42.15 per liter. But the present market price is around Rs100 per liter. This proves how the Government is looting the people particularly the transport sector.

M.V.Act Amendment 2019: The M.V.Act Amendment 2019 is aimed at eliminating the petty vehicle owners and to hand over the entire Transport Sector to Big Corporate houses like Uber/Ola/Rapido etc.

Even the personal vehicle owners will also be compelled to switch over to App based Companies to avoid heavy penalties and harassment. With this motto only the “Aggregator” is incorporated in the M.V.Act Amendment 2019. The companies started with Taxi Drivers first, later included Auto Rickshaw and Bike services. To attract the Drivers to attach to the Companies at the initial stage, they have offered huge incentives. When a large number of drivers attached, then the companies withdrew the incentives and squeezing the blood of the drivers. Now they have entered the goods transport segment also like Porter/Link etc.

STUs: Apart from the M.V.Act Amendment, introduction of” One Nation-One Permit “system, Operation of Electric Buses under Gross Cost Contract system, the 2021-22 Budget proposal to introduce 20,000 Buses under PPP mode is detrimental to STUs. The Uber Company has obtained permission to operate Bus services in India. Due to COVID, they did not start operations. But in the days to come they will start operation. All these are aimed at dismantling the existing STUs.

Transport Department: Almost all the activities of the Government Transport Department are being handed over to the Corporates like setting up Driving Schools, issuing of Driving Licenses, Fitness, Scrapping of the vehicle etc. This is to abandon the Transport Department. The small driving Schools which are giving practical training on the Road and will have to shut down their activities.

Auto Rickshaw Drivers: Auto Rickshaw has become a common transport and is expanding too many areas including villages to connect to the nearest towns. Providing sufficient parking places is the responsibility of the concerned local body authorities. But in reality it is grossly neglected. Even if provided they are just for name sake and are not sufficient. The Auto Rickshaw Drivers are made scapegoats and are being fined in a big way. The harassment of the Police authorities is on the high side. Adding fuel to this, in some cities the authorities are forced to switch over to CNG. Conversion to Gas is a costly affair and sufficient filling stations are installed leading to huge queues waiting for hours together. In some cities the Auto Rickshaw Drivers are forced to switch over to Electric vehicles. This is highly expensive and affordable to the petty Auto Drivers.

Private Bus Workers: In many states where STUs are not there the Private Bus Workers do not have the monthly wage system. The day they work, they will be paid something for that day. The statutory provisions like weekly paid rest, ESI, PF are nightmares for them.

Truck Drivers: The condition of the Truck Drivers particularly the National Permit Vehicle Drivers is very pathetic. The condition for double drivers has been removed. They were compelled to work for weeks together in many cases. Infrastructural facilities such as parking, filling up oil, toilets, rest rooms etc are nowhere provided. The harassment by the Police Officials has become the order of the day. They are facing insurgency attacks and even losing their lives.

Vehicle Scrapping Policy: In the name of curbing pollution, the Government has introduced the Scrapping policy. All the Petrol vehicles after 15 years and the Diesel vehicles after 10 years have to be scrapped. This will be a heavy burden and not affordable. In reality this is aimed to benefit the Original Vehicle Manufacturers.

Electric Vehicles: Now the emphasis is on Electric Vehicles. The Government has decided to ban Diesel/Petrol vehicles after 2030. The cost of the EV will be very high and infrastructure facilities like charging points, production of Batteries etc are very much inadequate. Around 10 lakh workers in the Automobile Spare Parts Manufacturing Units will lose their jobs. Actually the USA and Europe are contributing more than 50% to global warming. They should take up first and in the meantime, the infrastructure can be developed. But the hurry of the Indian Government is at the dictates of the big nations for their profits.

Social Security: The Government of India is collecting lakhs of crores of Rupees from the Transport Sector every year. But not spending anything for the welfare of the Transport Workers. Even the Government replied to a RTI petition by AIRTWF that they do not have the details of the workers and how many are working. This is the state of affairs. After prolonged struggles by AIRTWF the then Government in the year 2006, has entrusted the job to V.V.Giri National Labor Institute for study and to recommend the measure for the welfare of the workers. The Institute after thorough study has submitted a detailed report to the Government in 2008. They have recommended the enactment of the Social Security Act for the unorganized Road Transport Workers and to amend the relevant acts to be made

applicable even where a single worker is working. Ironically the Government did not open the report till date. It is lying in the cold storage.

AIRTWF has studied various Social Security Schemes and prepared a draft Social Security Scheme for the unorganized Road Transport Workers. The scheme can be implemented effectively, if a meagre amount of Rs.15, 000 crores per annum is allocated by the Central Government. Monthly Pension, Medical facilities, Accident Insurance etc for all the Road Transport Workers can be provided with the scheme.

App based company Drivers: The Uber/Ola and other App based Companies are squeezing the blood of the Drivers. The Companies are charging 25 to 30% as commission. They do not own the vehicles. The vehicle owner has to bear the Insurance premium, Diesel Charges and maintenance charges etc. Simply for connecting the passengers the Companies are charging huge amount of money. Many strikes have taken place in different cities. Some drivers have even committed suicide. The Government is not bothered about the sufferings of the drivers.

At this stage the LDF Government of Kerala has developed an App called "SAVARI" for the betterment of the Drivers and to the public. Only 8% charges are collected from the drivers for the operation and maintenance. This is being implemented in Tiruvananthapuram district as a pilot project. When a small state, Kerala has developed an App, why can't the Central Government develop such an App at national level? If this is done then the charges will be less than 8%. AIRTWF has studied the SAVARI App and is preparing a draft in line with that to place before the Central Government.

Amendments to M.V.Act amendment 2019: M.V.Act Amendment 2019 is a draconian one. AIRTWF has studied the M.V.Act Amendment 2019 thoroughly and prepared suitable amendments to Protect and strengthen the STUs, to protect the entire Road transport Sector and the petty vehicle owners.

Solution: It is the need of the hour to get organized and prepare for a united action to build pressure on the Government. This is only the way to protect the industry and for the welfare of the workers. The 380 days of prolonged and militant struggle by the farmers in the country

has proved that we can win provided we fight together till we succeed. The farmers have shown the way for other sectors too.

The Road Transport sector has a powerful striking capacity. If the Transport is paralyzed throughout the country, the life of the people will be badly affected and huge pressure will be mounted on the Government. We should prepare for such a struggle. As a first step in that direction let us march to Delhi on 05th April 2023 and demonstrate our strength and capacity.