



### **Labour starved mills in South India lean on North East for manpower**

Textile firms in South India have started looking at the North-Eastern states to address labour shortages in their factories. The mills have said that the Tripura government is the first to respond and that the units would soon come out with a code of conduct for migrant workers. Tamil Nadu accounts for nearly 45 per cent of the spinning capacity in the country, 70 per cent of the knitted garment manufacturing capacity and 22 per cent of weaving. Around six million people are directly employed by the sector. The sector has been facing labour shortage the past ten years or so, due to exponential growth in manufacturing facilities. In major clusters like Coimbatore, Tirupur, Dindigul, migrant workers account for anything between 30 per cent and 90 per cent of the workforce, depending on the mills.

### **Labour strike at Synthite Industries settled; 7 workers agree for transfer**

The nearly one-month-long standoff between the management of Synthite Industries and the CITU-affiliated trade union was amicably resolved on Tuesday with the union agreeing to the transfer of seven workers of the company to outside the state on condition they would be deployed back to its factory at Kadayiruppu, Kolencherry, in a time-bound manner. The agreement was reached at the conciliatory meeting convened by Labour Commissioner A Alexander in Thiruvananthapuram, which was attended by senior executives of Synthite Industries and CITU leaders. Ernakulam Regional Labour Commissioner K Sreelal also attended it, as per the agreement copy signed by the Labour Commissioner.

### **A triple blow to job guarantee scheme**

The 11,000 crore fraud that diamond merchant Nirav Modi is said to have created is a figure that needs to be put in perspective. The total amount of wages pending under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme for the whole country (2016-17) was around 11,000 crore too. This sum is a fifth of the MGNREGA budget announced for financial year 2018-19. MGNREGA stands out in its worker-centric legislation and stated emphasis on transparency and accountability. Several potentially progressive measures such as a real-time management information system have been put in place. The scheme is meant to be demand-driven in the sense that the government is mandated to provide work within 15 days of a worker seeking work. Otherwise the worker

is entitled to an unemployment allowance. A second key provision of the Act pertains to payment of wages within 15 days of completion of work, failing which a worker is entitled to a delay compensation of 0.05% per day of the wages earned. However, both these provisions have been routinely violated. There is an ongoing Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court (*Swaraj Abhiyan v. the Union of India*) concerning these violations. We look at three ways in which a lack of funds has led to a subverting of these provisions in letter and spirit.

### **International emigrants from Kerala declined to 2.2 million in 2016**

Giving a twist to the demographic transition, the number of international emigrants from Kerala - which peaked during 2013 with 2.4 million people living abroad - declined to 2.2 million in 2016. Simultaneously, migration to other states declined from 1.1 million in 2003 to 0.9 million in 2008 and further declined to 0.65 million in 2016, as per a Kerala Migration Survey. The statistics underscore the state's future of human development is dependent on how fast inward migration catches up with the current level of development. On the domestic inward migration front, around 2.5 million migrant workers from other states were estimated to be present in Kerala in 2013. However, as per the growth patterns indicated by the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, 3.5 to 4 million workers from other states were estimated in 2017, although economic stagnation during 2017-18 affected the flow of migrants. This is likely to grow once the current industrial stagnation is over.

### **Where the gig worker fits inside the firm**

Bots don't sign employment contracts. We humans do. Much of the knowledge pool on the future of work is informed by shiny new words — artificial intelligence, bots and algorithms — but these don't ever exist in isolation. See that grizzled gentleman in the corner office poring over your employment letter? His team oversees the paperwork for all kinds of labour — full-time and part-time. Those are people empowered to interpret gaps in the legalese, they call the shots until you threaten to quit. Most employment contracts are essentially incomplete, a breakdown affects both parties (even if unequally), the contract tells you how much you'll earn and how quickly you could be fired but it rarely tells you what all you need to do in varying circumstances. The future of work is as much about bots as about how contracts are interpreted in a world where digital tools bend time and melt distances. It's about where the gig economy worker fits inside the firm. For all the swirling jargon on the informal economy, the perpetual gripe of freelancers' unanswered emails and pending payments speak to the outsize influence of firm level processes and contracts even in the most modern workplaces.

### **Over 300,000 workers to be employed in solar, wind energy sectors in India**

Over 300,000 workers will be employed in the solar and wind energy sectors in India to meet the country's target of generating 175 gigawatts of electricity from renewable sources by 2022, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has estimated in a report. The ILO said in its annual flagship report on the state of the global job market that action to combat climate change could create millions of new job opportunities and "more than" offset losses in traditional industries. The UN labour agency said that 24 million new posts "will be created globally by 2030", but added that "the right policies to promote a greener economy" must also be in place for this to happen, along with better social safety nets for workers. The report 'World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with jobs' said India has set itself the goal of generating 175 gigawatts of electricity from renewable sources by 2022, which corresponds to around half of its total electricity production.

