



ALL INDIA BANK EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

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**TO ALL OFFICE BEARERS, STATE FEDERATIONS
AND ALL INDIA BANKWISE ORGANISATIONS
(FOR CIRCULATION TO ALL MEMBERS)**

**52nd Anniversary of Bank Nationalisation
AIBEA's National Campaign - Webinar Lecture 15
By Com. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, General Secretary, HMS**

**'Labour Laws are changed to suit the interests of Corporates
and Industrialists' - Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, General Secretary,
Hind Mazdoor Sabha**

All India Bank Employees' Association invited Com. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, General Secretary of Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) to address the participants of the AIBEA's ongoing National Seminar series to commemorate the 52nd anniversary of Bank Nationalisation. In his address, Com. Harbhajan Singh dealt in detail the current scenario of labour policies of the government and the role of trade union movement in our country.

Gist of his lecture: He drew the attention of the participants that going by the actions and attitude of the present Government, one can understand and feel that there is undeclared emergency and thus the labour movement is passing through a very tough and challenging period.

The government is trying to privatise the public sector units. Even when the Finance Minister announced the relief package during the first wave of Corona, it could be realised that it would favour only the Corporate Sector and working class would not get any relief at all. In that speech, the Finance Minister has said that the public sector units would be privatised.

Even the Ordnance factory is also being privatised with allowing FDI in the defence sector. The 500 block of the coal mines is also being privatised and handed over to Adani, Ambani and Vedanta etc.

They have also decided to slowly privatise the Indian Railways and in the first phase 109 trains and stations, 7 production units to the multinationals and corporates. They have decided to procure Diesel locomotives from GE from America when only electrical locomotives are required in our country, all due to the pressure from American Government.

The banks have been reduced to 12 from the earlier 20 and the work pressure in the banks have increased enormously. During the pandemic, Gautam Adani has captured 6 airports, which have been established and built up with the help of the tax-payers' money. The Government is handing over the country's assets to a very few corporates.

In the last one and half years, the Indian Railways has come to a near standstill except for very few services. Because the Government has decided to paint Railways as a sick unit as a ruse to privatise. Railways is a public utility service and they have decided to handover 600 railway stations to the private companies. One of the stations was handed over to private sector initially with 46 years' lease but after protest from the private entity that they can't make profit, the lease has been extended to 99 years for the same bid. But, this Government has no mandate to handover the public sector units to the private hands.

That is why the Central Trade Unions have joined hands and started agitating including launching continuous strikes. In the Coal Block auction, which was launched by the Prime Minister, 3-day strike was observed on that occasion. 41 Ordnance factories manufacturing defence weapons for the army have been decided to be handed over to the private sector.

The resources of the banks should be utilized for the welfare of the common people. When AIBEA was agitating for nationalisation of banks, the then Prime Minister relented and nationalised 14 major banks. But there were opposition and they went to Court to stop the process but they failed. After the nationalisation of banks, the all-round growth was achieved in the country including scheme for alleviation of poverty, credit to needy sector, advances to agriculture, job generation etc.

In 1991, our country embraced the liberalisation policies and decided to join WTO. We were fighting against these liberalisation policies from then on. But we were being replied and told that multinationals would come, establish factories and job generation would be enormous.

But, after 30 years, we know the factual position. The multinationals came and started making profits. When Vajpayee Government came, the FDI limit was increased from 10% to 40% in majority of the sectors. But, whatever was said that prosperity would be achieved for the poor and marginalized, nothing like that happened. For example, Rs 8000 crore worth BALCO factory was handed over for a cheap price of just above 500 Crores.

Like this a lot of public sector units have been handed over to the private hands. Now they are attempting to privatise the public sector banks. Even a person like Baba Ramdev has become a very rich man with the help of this Government.

But, Jan Dhan accounts, social oriented programmes are implemented only by the public sector banks.

The industries and factories run by the private sector have violated the established labour laws. The inspection by the Government to ensure that the labour laws are not violated, has virtually stopped.

Government has issued instructions to ban any new posts in the Government. 3% of the existing posts have also been abolished. Now, in the government sector, more than 50% of the staff have been reduced. The workload is enormous. Employees are made to work beyond their working hours. The government says that there will be universal labour laws but it is only a universal lie.

Labour law reforms undertaken by the government are detrimental to the working class. There is no necessity for the factories and industries for

inspection and there is no need to take license from the government to become a contractor.

The contractors, even with license, violate the labour laws and they don't pay minimum wages and virtually treat the workers as slaves. But, if the factory in-charge gives a certificate that labour laws are adhered to, it will be taken as gospel truth by the government and the concept of inspection is totally abolished and stopped.

When the workers have died due to Corona, the Labour Minister has stated on the floor of the Parliament that the government does not have the data as to how many workers died due to covid in the last 16 months. Whenever Central Trade Unions write to the Prime Minister in the past, there is not even an acknowledgement. The representatives have met the members of the Standing Committee on Labour and since they represent various other political parties, the views of the trade union leaders have been expressed.

He congratulated AIBEA for arranging such series of lectures for a month to commemorate the 52nd anniversary of Bank Nationalisation and the recording of all these lectures will become handy documents when we go for campaign against the anti-worker policies of the Government.

When Central Trade Unions have demanded of the Labour Minister to abolish the 4 labour codes, he refused and said that the government can't withdraw the labour codes. Hence, the Central Trade Unions have struck work including employees in coal, railways, banks, insurance etc. But, the government has changed the labour laws to suit the corporates and industrialists. There will be exploitation. Minimum wages is not being paid. If employees refuse to perform overtime work, it will be treated as being on illegal strike and he/she can be even dismissed.

He said that the present government is a corporate government. Even though all the Central Trade Unions strike work, BMS is not in the fight against this Government. But, the other central trade unions have struck work, went on hunger strike, went on Parliament Morcha including courting arrest. Working Class is not afraid of CBI or Police or any harassment. We have to cohesively work with close coordination and when the Parliament begins for the Monsoon Session shortly, we should show our protest. Throughout the country, the workers are on fight. Farmers are on fight. Bank employees are on fight. This is despite the fact that the government is trying to paint anyone who goes against their policies as anti-Indian or anti-national. But, we shall have to fight against the retrograde policies of the Government.

He concluded congratulating AIBEA that it is a fighting organisation and will continue to fight against the attempts of the government to privatise the public sector banks.

Com. Rajneesh Gupta, Central Committee Member of AIBEA coordinated the programme and proposed the vote of thanks.

Yours comradely,



**C.H. VENKATACHALAM
GENERAL SECRETARY**