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Social safety net for 36 crore workers in unorganised sector

Report's Suggestions

Penal interest on delayed payment of wages

One paid day of rest

An eight-hour working day with at least half-hour break

Right to organize

A statutory national minimum wage for all wage workers and home workers employments specifically done by women to be brought on par with employment certified as being of equivalent value

Sexual harassment, provision of childcare; and provision of basic amenities

No deduction of wages in form of fines

Says report as it suggests a slew of reforms

Kay Benedict New Delhi

In a prelude to a landmark legislation to provide social safety net for over 36 crore workers in the unorganized sector, the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) headed by Dr Arjun Sengupta submitted its report to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday. This report is the first of its kind in the country on the unorganized workers covering both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

The report has inter alia suggested a slew of measures to better the lot of the unorganized sector workers neglected hitherto. The UPA government is expected to discuss the report in detail and a comprehensive legislation for protection of unorganized workers is expected to be tabled in the monsoon session of Parliament.

"The unorganized sector employs as much as 86 per cent of the total workforce in the Indian Economy. The Commission's landmark legislative recommendations have a potential to improve the quality of life of more than 340 million of the most marginalized and vulnerable working poor of India," Sengupta said. The mother of all legisla-

tion, if enacted, will be the second most populist measure (after the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) that the UPA government can take credit for. The move may also pay electoral dividends to the Congress, though even the Left parties have been pushing hard for social safety net for the unorganized sector workers since last two years.

According to the survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in 1999-2000, the total employment in both the organized and the unorganised sectors in the country was 39.7 crore, of which 2.8 crore are in the organised sector and 36.9 crore are in the unorganised sector.

Of this, 23.7 crore workers are in the agricultural sector and 1.7 crore are engaged in the construction sector. Remaining workers are engaged in mining, manufacturing and service sector. On account of their unorganised nature, these workers do not get adequate social security and welfare".

Sengupta in his report has prescribed minimum conditions of work and introduction of a minimum social security to unorganised workers in agriculture as well as non-agriculture sectors.

safety net