

LETTER

PLIGHT OF THE UNORGANISED

The 'Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihood in the Unorganised Sector' is the first comprehensive research on the informal sector in the country based on government data between 1993-2004. A majority of workers in this segment is composed of Dalits and Muslims, who face lack of proper regulation and ineffective implementation where regulation exists.

Flying in the face of the much-touted growth rates in the country, the report proves that India's high growth rates remain inequitable as around 836 million Indians live on a paltry Rs 20 per day for their daily sustenance.

The report has been submitted to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the National Commission of Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) is inviting comments from people and experts on it. The advisory body had earlier released a report on the urban street vendors and also on social security for unorganised workers.

Defining the unorganised sector, the report says: "The unorganised sector consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers."

The report reflects on the fact that the Indian economy may have grown in recent years but 86% of India's working population that works in an unorganised sector is without social security, works in poor conditions, hardly has social protection and security and earns relatively low wages and incomes.

The workers in the Indian labour market are illiterate and belong to poor and socially-discriminated groups. The agriculture sector has been found to be in bad shape, specially for the small and the marginal farmers, as they are forced to spend more than they earn and their condition deteriorates when they are under debt.

The NCEUS was set up in 2004 by the present government so that it could initiate measures for the welfare of the unorganised workers and enhance the welfare and well-being of farmers, farm labour and workers and also assure a secure future for their families.

A Reader

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