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'Organised, unorganised workers were kept divided purposefully'

■ Efforts needed to provide social security to unorganised workers

■ Staff Reporter

EXPRESSING solidarity to the national convention representatives of various trade unions were of the opinion that the government has purposefully kept organised and unorganised workers divided. It was also stated that the NGOs and trade unions were never opposing each other. In fact their roles were complementary to each other.

The deliberations on the second day of the National Convention for Social Security for Unorganised Workers began with presentations by groups formed to discuss varied issues pertaining to unorganised workers.

The subjects included Social security versus employment regulation; Discrimination in social security benefits; Structure of social security administration; Sexual harassment, violence and gender discrimination; Need for separate comprehensive law for agriculture workers; Feasibility of insurance-based social security and privatisation of insurance, alternative ways as in ESIS and New economic reforms and unorganised sector.

The session of presentation of reports by each group and discussion on it was chaired by Dr Shrinivas Khandewale.

The next session was mainly relating to interaction with trade union representatives.

H Mahadevan, Deputy General Secretary of AITUC said that a comprehensive legislation for unorganised sector covering service conditions, employment regulation, minimum wage and dispute settlement mechanism is required. He appealed to the NGOs to be a part of the national campaign on the issue. He laid stress on effective implementation of the legislation. Over 60 per cent of the workers in unorganised sector are either contractual workers or casual workers. The units in which they work are



Dr Shrinivas Khandewale addressing the gathering at National Convention on Social Security for Unorganised Workers. Other dignitaries on the dais look on.

often registered as small scale industry and lack support of authorities such as police, labour welfare department towards organising these workers, he said.

R A Mittal, National Secretary, Hind Mazdoor Sabha said that trade unions and NGOs were never at loggerheads and acted as support to each other. He stressed the need to introduce bill in the Parliament so that debate on the issue could be started.

Ashok Ghosh, National Secretary, United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) said that concerted efforts are needed to provide social security to unorganised workers. As a first step towards this minimum wages should be given to these workers.

D Thankappan, Secretary, New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) said that the workers which contribute about 65 per cent of the GDP are deprived of social and economic security mainly due to lack of political will. Quoting Arjun Sengupta report Bakshi of AITUC said that three per cent of the GDP should be reserved for providing social security to unorganised workers.

Harekrishna Debnath, Chairman,

National Fishworkers Forum was of the opinion that three per cent of GDP should be reserved for fishworkers alone.

Dr Sharad Babu from Dharwad University said that there is discrepancy in defining unorganised sector as well as social security. These definitions should be simplified so as to formulate legislation for them.

Subhash Bhatnagar of National Campaign Committee for Unorganised Social Sector said that the legislation made so far could not benefit unorganised workers as they were never designed keeping in mind their genuine problems. He stressed on employment security and minimum wage as an integral part of the legislation.

Dr Rupa Kulkarni of Vidarbha Molkareen Sanghatna, Baba Adhav, President NCC-USW, Sanjay M G of National Alliance of Peoples' Movement participated in the deliberations under session on 'Interaction with representatives of peoples' movement'. The convention will conclude on Saturday. The deliberations will begin at 9.30 am and the valedictory function will be held at 2.30 pm.