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Press Release

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The government must transfer Rs.15,000 per month to all citizens of the country!

While taking note of the 1.7 lakh crore package announced by the Finance Minister to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the poor in India, Social Security Now (SSN) said that the package is inadequate and disrespectful to the recipients as it involves transfer of less than Rs.1000 a month to their accounts and justifies payment of wages less than minimum wages.

SSN, a national network of civil society and informal worker organisations, submitted a petition today to the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministries of Health and Labour, demanding transfer of Rs.15,000 to all citizens, for next three months.

The petition was signed by more than 900 people including representatives from trade unions & working peoples organisations such as AITUC, AICTTU, UTUC, SEWA-Kerala, National Domestic Workers Union, Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch, National Alliance for Peoples Movement and prominent people including economist Arun Kumar, Biswajit Dhar, literary critic Hiren Gohain, sociologist Nandini Sundar, Satish Deshpande, feminist scholar Nivedita Menon, political scientist Aditya Nigam and others.

The petition said that at this juncture, a distinction between organised-unorganised or BPL-APL is administratively cumbersome to establish and therefore the transfer must be made universally without any discrimination. This will empower the vulnerable working population and give them money to buy daily food items, paying for rent, electricity, water, mobile charges, clothing and other essential daily expenses, the petition said.

The petition further demanded that since there are only about 25 crore ration card holders in the country, the Public Distribution System must be accessible to all people, irrespective of BPL or residential status, to procure essential food items during the period of pandemic.

The petition also said Government must ask companies to deposit at least 50% of the CSR funds in an account earmarked for such relief purposes.

While lauding the Government for introducing Rs.50lakh insurance cover to the Corona warriors, the petition urged the Government that all coronavirus tests must be made free - whether they are conducted in public or private hospitals and labs.

The petition emphasised that while the entire population needs to be protected from the ravages of the COVID19 crisis, appropriate mechanisms must be developed to ensure proper

inclusion of migrant workers, homeless, women – especially female headed households and single women, sex workers, senior citizens, children and other vulnerable sections in relief packages. Special steps must be taken to take care of the specific needs of the vulnerable communities. Separate clinics or timings for ensuring safe deliveries in hospitals would be of paramount importance. Public buildings and facilities – such as schools, panchayats, AC train coaches etc can be used to provide immediate shelter and food to the homeless, migrant workers and other distressed sections.

Social Security Now (SSN) is a decade old platform of more than 500 organisations – including trade unions, feminist organisations, Dalit rights organisations, women, farmers and others - that campaigns for universal social security coverage in India.

Ambarish Rai, R S Tiwari Arun Khote, J John, Soma K Parthasarathy and Mayur Chetia

for

Social Security Now (SSN)