

From Director's Desk

BUDGET 2023-24:

Does It Benefit the Common Man?

Fundamental Issues Ignored: Rural Poor, Unorganized Sector, Issues Of Unemployment and Inflation

There are presently about 3.7 crore people unemployed in the country. The Budget does not spell out any long term solution for increasing employment. The unorganised sector employs 93 per cent of the labour force who contribute 60% of the GDP of the country; they were badly hit during the demonetization; the migrant labour is still struggling to rise from post Covid fall out. The supply chain of which they were a part has been weakened. This budget does not have much to resolve their predicament. The Budget is silent on agricultural unrest. It buries its head in the sand, and rather than help solve the crisis that was created. It has not addressed MSP for farmers, new jobs for youth and railways also ignored in toto.

On MNREGA:

In a period of falling employment and lower real wages especially for the rural poor, the allocation for the MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) has been cut by around one-third from the likely spending in the current year, to only Rs 60,000 crore.

On Children:

Children, which constitute 37% population of India: the share of children in the Union Budget 2023-24 continue to decline with a total share of 2.30 per cent. While the total Union Budget 2023-24 grew by a massive 1415 per cent against previous year (BE), the Budget for Children increased by 11.92 per cent against 2022-23 BE. In absolute terms, the total allocation for Budget for Children in 2023-24 Union Budget stands at INR 103790.70 Crore.

It is pertinent to highlight that the share of children in the Union Budget has been on a constant decline in the last

11 years. It also bears significance as the Government of India is gearing up to submit its 5th and 6th combined Periodic Report to the UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC).

In reply to an RTI application filed by the PTI, the Ministry of Women and Child Development shared that as of October 14, 2021 there were 17,76,902 (17.76 lakh/1.7 million) severely acute malnourished children (SAM) and 15,46,420 (15.46 lakh/1.5 million) moderately acute malnourished (MAM) children in India. The prevalence of anaemia among children remain as one of the serious concerns. As per 2019-21, NFHS3 estimates indicate that anaemia prevalence among children and adolescents aged 6-59 months and 15-19 years has increased. In order to address this issue, Anemia Mukht Bharat (AMB) was launched (in 2018) under the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyaan and the targets were set to reduce anaemia by 3% per year, its been four years the lane but the implementation remains dilatory.

On Minority:

In the Union Budget 2023-24, the allocation for Ministry of Minority Affairs reduced by 37.81 per cent followed by 33.33 per cent reduction in the allocation for Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Further, the allocation towards 'Free Coaching and Allied Scheme' under the aegis of Ministry of Minority Affairs received reduced allocation of (62.03%) INR 30 Crore in the Union Budget 2023-24.

'Pre Matric Scholarship for Minorities' and 'Merit-Cum Means Based Scholarship for Minorities' also received major budget cuts in Union Budget 2023-24 with reduced allocations of 69.61 per cent and 87.95 per cent respectively. These schemes are significant in nature as they are meant to improve the educational outcomes as well as educational opportunities for children belonging to minority communities.

While the major thrust on promoting Eklavya Model

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