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FM: GOVERNMENT HAS NO INTENTION TO PRIVATISE EITHER RAILWAYS OR COAL INDIA; FOCUS OF HIS GOVERNMENT IS TO CREATE MORE JOBS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES BESIDE SAFEGUARDING THE EXISTING JOBS AND GIVE BETTER ENVIRONMENT FOR EASE OF LIVING FOR THE COMMON MAN

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The Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley assured the representatives of various Trade Unions that the Government has no intention to privatise either railways or Coal India. He said that focus of his Government is to create more jobs and employment opportunities beside safeguarding the existing jobs and give better environment for ease of living for the common man among others. The Finance Minister said that's why we need more money for investment in infrastructure sector in order to create more job opportunities for our youth. He said that our approaches may be different but goal is same. The Finance Minister Shri Jaitley was making the Opening Remarks during his Pre Budget Consultative Meeting with the representatives of Trade Union Groups here today. He said that the Government wants to create better social security system for the labour force working both in organized and unorganized sector.

The Finance Minister Shri Jaitley said that more than 63 percentage of population in our country is in age group of 15-59 years which is defined as India's "demographic dividend". The challenge for the country now is in planning and acting towards converting its 'potential' into enhanced opportunities of growth by dovetailing the quality of manpower through skill development etc. The Finance Minister mentioned that according to an Indian Labour Report (2007), 300 million youth would enter the labour force by 2025. The main issue to address today is not just providing employment but of increasing the employability of labour force in India. He said that skill deficit among the labour force has been recognized as a major factor that drives a large number towards low income levels and perpetrates inequality. Consequently, the Finance Minister said that the thrust on skill development as well as on ‘Make in India’ are Government’s endeavors to improve employability and generate employment avenues.

The Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley informed the trade union representatives that a cause for concern is that the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of employment decelerated during 2004-05 to 2011-12 to 0.5 per cent, as compared to the 2.8 per cent growth during 1999-2000 to 2004-05. Highlighting the major initiatives of his Government in labour sector, the Finance Minister said that the Apprentice Act 1961 was amended on 18.12.2014 to make it more responsive to industry and youth. He said that the Government is also working affirmatively to bring a single uniform law for MSME sector to ensure their operational efficiency and improve productivity while ensuring job creation at a large scale. The Finance Minister further said that a unified Labour Portal Scheme called ‘Shram Suvidha Portal’ has been launched to for timely redressal of grievances and to create a conducive environment for industrial development. Its main features are : (1) Unique Labour Identification Number (LIN) allotted to around six lakhs units facilitating online registration. (2) Filing of self-certified, simplified single online return instead of 16 separate returns by industries. (3) Transparent Labour Inspection Scheme via computerized system as per risk based criteria and uploading of Inspection Reports within 72 hours by labour inspectors. He said that many States like Rajasthan have also introduced major reforms in three labour legislations viz. the Industrial Disputes Act, the Factories Act and the Contract Labour Act.

The meeting was attended among others by Shri Jayant Sinha, Minister of State for Finance, , Shri Shaktikanta Das, Revenue Secretary, Shri Ratan P. Watal, Secretary (Expenditure), Dr Hasmukh Aadhia, Secretary (DFS), Ms. Ardhana Johri, Secretary (Disinvestment), Secretary, Labour, Dr. Arvind Subramanian, Chief Economic

Adviser, Ms. Anita Kapur, Chairperson, CBDT and Shri Kaushal Srivastava, Chairman, CBEC. Among the representatives of Trade Union Groups attended the meeting included Shri Vrijesh Upadhyay (BMS), Shri B.Surendran (BMS), Shri S.Q.Zama (INTUC), Shri K.K.Tiwari, (INTUC), Shri D.L.Sachdev (AITUC), Shri S.D.Tyagi (HMS), Shri Surendra Lal (HMS), Shri Tapan Sen (CITU), Shri R.K.Sharma (AIUTUC), Shri S.P.Tiwary (TUCC), Smt. Jyotiben Macwan (SEWA), Smt. Manali Shah (SEWA), Shri Santosh Roy (AICCTU), Shri M.Shanmugam (LPF), Shri Deepak Jaiswal (NFITU), Shri Shrikant Lachake (NFITU), Ms Panudda Boonpala (ILO) and Shri Ashok Ghosh (UTUC).

Various suggestions were made by representatives of representatives of Trade Union Groups. Major suggestions include more allocation for social security schemes for workers, same wages for contract labour as being paid to regular worker for the same job on the principle of 'same pay for same work', regularization of Contract Labour after certain time, to ensure strict compliance of labour laws by MNCs, prior consultation with trade unions before initiating any amendment of any laws affecting directly or indirectly the interests of labour force, and increase in minimum wages based on the decision of the Raptakos Judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court .

Other suggestions include to keep prices of food items and other essential items under check, increase in purchasing power of common man, make living easies for them, revival of viable sick industries, post budget interaction with representatives of trade unions, expansion of MGNREGA to all the districts and increase in number of working days to 200, more allocation of funds in budget for social sector including health and education sector and 10% cut in defence expenditure, no privatization of coal, railways and insurance sectors, PF Act be amended to cover every employee/worker under EPF Act, and role of labour market institutions be strengthened among others.

Other suggestions include raise in Corporate tax, impose tax on SEZ and FDIsand use this for enhanced social security expenditures, convergence of all medical schemes and benefits into one scheme for the benefit of unorganized sector workers, support price for tea, rubber, cardamom and other agriculture products , budgetary support for traditional industries like jute, textiles, handloom, silk and carpet, establish universal PDS, and special package to retrieve the closed and abandoned plantations etc. among others

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