**GLENGAZE**  

**“MODEL UNITED NATIONS”**

# **POSITION PAPER**

***“ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS.THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH REASON AND CONSCIENCE AND SHOULD ACT TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER IN SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD.NOT EVERYTHING THAT IS FACED CAN BE CHANGED BUT NOTHING CAN BE CHANGED UNTILL IT IS FACED”***

## COUNTRY: INDIA

## COMMITTEE: UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)

## AGENDA: POST CORONA IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEE’S STATUS

POPULATION: 1.38 Billion

DELEGATE: SAGNIK MUKHERJEE

 **INTRODUCTION:** In a world pandemic threat, COVID-19 mitigation is crucial to the human life and for reducing distortion of livelihood. The ICTV (International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses) labelled SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) virus induced corona virus disease (COVID-19) was outbreak from Wuhan, China from this January. Similar kind of outbreak had happened previously with different pathogens named SARS-CoV (2003) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome-MERS-CoV (2015).

 India witnessed the world’s largest nationwide lockdown, ever since Prime Minister Modi’s announced it on

 March 24. The time given to a country of over 1.3 billion people to prepare for a 21-day lockdown was a mere

 four hours. On May 17, the Indian government extended the lockdown for the fourth time, till May 31, and

 offered considerable relaxations.

 **THE ONSET OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN INDIA**

Moving towards the 20th year of the 21st century, India had significant development schemes passed in form of bills like ‘THE APPROPRAIATION (NO.2) BILL’ and ‘THE COMPANIES (AMMENDMENT) BILL’; focusing to escalate the growth rate of the country by optimization of industrial production. Woefully, the proper implementation of these schemes was hindered by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, rather a new set of policies were devised to limit the corona spread.

While dozens of countries across the world were under lockdown to contain the virus’s spread, in crowded and impoverished places like India, many feared that the measures could spark social unrest and distress situation may occur. India’s nationwide lockdown was one of the longest in the world, extending up to 8 weeks.

### **THE PRESENT SCENARIO: EFFECTS OF PANDEMIC SPREAD ON MIGRANTS AND WORKERS:**

* Though the lockdown was implemented to limit the virus’s spread, it had both pros and cons.
* The lockdown had been benefitting in:
* 1. limiting the virus’s spread, as it is estimated that the number of patients infected by Corona in India, would have been 8 times more, if the lockdown was not implemented.

 2. The lockdown had been a way to bring awareness in the general public regarding the precautionary methods they must follow to safeguard themselves from the infection.

3. Nature had got a chance to restore the environment, as due to lockdown, human interference in environment had been limited to an extent.

* In general, Corona pandemic had not only created an adverse effect on the health status of citizens, but it had ruined the other pillars of the society as well. It had severely affected the following:
* **CONCERN 1:** With the looming fear of hunger, men, women and children were forced to begin arduous journeys back to their villages - cycling or hitching rides on lorries, water tankers, milk vans and even inside the concrete mixing trucks. For many, walking was the only option. Some travelled for a few hundred kilometres, while others covered more than a thousand to go home. They were not alone - some had young children and others had pregnant wives, and the life they had built for themselves packed into their ragtag bags.
* **STEPS TAKEN FOR CONCERN1**: *Step1*: State governments set up thousands of camps to house lakhs of migrants and to stop the exodus, Delhi government provided free food to 4 lakh people every day, as of late March. Over 500 hunger relief centres were set up by the Delhi government.
* *Step 2* : To cater the needs of the migrants and prevent them from leaving the camps, the government of Kerala changed the food being provided by adding north Indian dishes to the menu, providing carom boards and recharge facilities for phones, as well as provide other medical essentials such as masks, sanitizers, and medicines
* *Step3*: On 1 May, the central government permitted the Indian Railways to launch "Shramik Special" trains for the migrant workers and others stranded. . As of 28 May, 91 lakh migrants had travelled back home in government-arranged transport facilities.
* **Drawback**: This service was not free, with additional charges over the normal fares. The central government then faced criticism from the opposition, when the Indian National Congress(INC) promising to sponsor the tickets of the migrants on 4 May. The government then announced that the Railways would offer an 85% subsidy on the train fares, with the state governments funding the remaining 15%. However, the migrants were still forced to pay an undisclosed amount in some cases.
* **CONCERN 2**: According to the Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN), migrants were confused about the exact procedures to register themselves for travel. Many state registration portals were either in English or the regional language of the states, which a very few migrants could understand. Further, general lack of information from the government to the migrants had resulted in them paying large sums of money to register themselves.
* **STEPS TAKEN FOR CONCERN2:**
* Step1:State governments ensured that translators were installed to help the migrants.
* Step2: A panel of IAS officers was made to supervise the registration and make sure that every migrant can get home safely.
* **Drawback**
* It appears to me that the “medicine” to counter coronavirus, in our case, has become more deadly than the virus itself.
* **CONCERN 3:** Shorn of everything, these migrants have been mobilizing the cost of their return journeys home by selling their family valuables. The stringent lockdown is like a double-edged sword for them: Their sources of income had dried up, and the little resources back home are not sufficient to help them withstand the hardship of the situation. Many states reported high numbers of positive cases of COVID-19 among the migrants returning home as lockdown restrictions eased.
* **STEPS TAKEN FOR CONCERN 3**:
* Step1: Many NGOs came forward by making generous donations.
* Step2: Many citizens gave up their savings to help these migrants.
* **Drawback**
* Migrant workers must be able to believe that this is a country for all, without any discrimination. They do not require mercy, they should be allowed to live with dignity.
* **CONCERN 4**: States also imposed strict measures for migrants to follow, either while leaving or after entering state borders. Migrant workers who decided to stay back during the exodus faced assault from their neighbours, who accused them of being infected with coronavirus. They thus could not venture out to buy food. Many also faced police brutality if they ventured out of their homes. Upon their return to their hometowns and villages, they were treated with either fear or a "class bias", being hosed down with disinfectants or soap solution in some cases. They were feared to be carrying coronavirus from the urban areas where they had been employed. They faced assault and harassment from the people of their hometowns. Many faced caste issues as they belonged to the lower caste, they got into property disputes, giving rise to the protests across the country, by demanding a transport facilities to take them back home, poor quality of food served, not being allowed to cross the border and preventing them to walk home. Some of the protests turned violent.
* **STEPS TAKEN FOR CONCERN 4**:
* *Step1*: Labour unions organized nationwide protests FOR the changes in labour laws. Seven left parties wrote to the President to intervene in the issue. Ten labour unions wrote to the ILO(International Labour Organisation) regarding the labour laws, on 14 May. In response, the ILO expressed "deep concern" to PM Modi and requested him to instruct the central and state governments to uphold commitments (towards labour laws) made by India.
* *Step 2*: Framed a National Employment Policy to look into labour welfare, setting up of a ‘Migrant Workers Welfare Fund’ and enrolling them under Ayushman Bharat — these are some of the measures suggested by a ministerial panel to motivate the workers to get back to work. The measure to encourage lakhs of migrant workers, who have returned or are returning to their native villages after losing jobs due to the Covid-19 lockdown, to come back to the cities and resume work is that every migrant worker should be automatically enrolled for the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY),popularly known as Ayushman Bharat — the government’s flagship health insurance scheme — so they are able to access cashless medical facilities at their workplace. In case a different version of PM-JAY has been implemented by state governments, the migrant workers should have access to those health schemes too.
* *Step 3*: The panel has also suggested setting up a ‘Migrant Workers Welfare Fund’ under which every migrant worker should be automatically enrolled into the fund that will operate on equal contributions from the worker, employer, home state government, destination state government and the central administration. This fund will be managed by the labour ministry, and will address the requirements of accommodation, health insurance and unemployment allowance in case a migrant worker shifts a job.
* **Drawback**
* The migrants have been left to the whims of police and there are instances where the police treat them inhumanly, xenophobic attacks, thousands dying of hunger and ‘we know they existed but never acknowleged their quantum.’
* **Summing up:**

Though, Lockdown had been benefitting for limiting the virus’s spread, but it had also lead many, especially the migrant class, in crisis. In a sense, this is a refugee crisis now and not merely a migrant crisis and had worsened the situations of the migrant class especially the migrant workers and labourers.

***This pandemic has taught us a lesson, that the government and every individual should take precautionary measures to overcome any such eventuality if it happens in the future***.

**FUTURE PLANS: SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM**: It is required to solve the problem of mid and post corona migrants and refugees status at the earliest. The following are some solutions to it:

* Special trains, buses, and other transportation services to be set-up, at cheap and affordable prices, with complete hygiene facilities, to prevent the further spread of the pandemic. : Every migrant should be paid Rs.20,000($264) for two months. They should not be questioned and they only need to prove their migrant status
* Lodging more schemes like MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranty act) to foster and protect the affected migrant classes, for an initial time being after.
* Focusing on optimizing industrial production, with effective use of adversely affected migrant classes as labourers and workers. This will provide the jobs to the seekers as well as GDP to the nation, thus; restoring the nation-building process.
* Special Emphasis on schemes like ‘Make in India’ should be done, to restore the trade surplus, by exporting more goods than importing.

 ***“ ITS BETTER TO TRY RATHER TO JUST STOP”***