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PRESS RELEASE

IFAT and TGPWU welcome EPFO and PM-JAY schemes for gig and platform workers; urge for stronger implementation

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The Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT) and the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU) welcome the inclusion of Gig and Platform Workers under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). This is a significant step towards recognizing the contributions of lakhs of app-based workers and ensuring their access to social security and healthcare.

We extend our gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister for Labour and Employment Mansukh Mandaviya for prioritizing the welfare of Gig and Platform Workers. However, successful implementation depends on critical structural reforms, including mandatory data-sharing by aggregators and their financial contributions to social security funds. Without these measures, many workers will be excluded.

Challenges and Recommendations:

1. Bridging the Awareness Gap on e-Shram: A significant number of gig and platform workers remain unaware of the e-Shram portal or hesitate to register due to mistrust in government schemes. Low digital literacy, lack of targeted outreach, and platforms' reluctance to inform workers have further widened this gap. Many eligible workers may remain excluded without robust awareness campaigns and proactive registration drives. Such drives must be undertaken in a timely manner in collaboration with workers' unions.

2. Addressing Challenges in Extending Healthcare Benefits (PM-JAY): PM-JAY is a targeted healthcare scheme that identifies the lowest 40% of poor and vulnerable populations based on Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data. This excludes anyone who does not meet the eligibility criteria. IFAT and TGPWU advocate for universalization of healthcare benefits rather than targeted access.

3. Beyond Welfare Measures – Need for Structural Reforms: While EPFO and PM-JAY are welcome moves, much more is needed beyond welfare measures. Gig and platform workers need legal protections, fair and transparent contracts, and rights to collective bargaining rights. Without addressing these core issues, such initiatives risk being superficial welfare measures rather than genuine steps towards worker empowerment. A dedicated Gig and Platform Workers' Law is urgently needed to provide comprehensive rights and social protections.

4. ESIC coverage for Gig and Platform Workers: While the Code on Social Security, 2020, confers power upon the Central Government to frame welfare schemes for unorganized workers, the implementation of ESIC (Employees' State Insurance Corporation) benefits for Gig and Platform Workers remains pending. Workers in the unorganized sector, including app-based drivers and delivery personnel, should have access to comprehensive social security that includes:

- ✓ Life and disability cover
- ✓ Accidental insurance
- ✓ Maternity benefits
- ✓ Creche facilities
- ✓ Other benefits as determined by the Central Government

The government must expedite the rollout of ESIC and other social security measures, ensuring mandatory employer contributions from platforms to sustain these schemes.

Call to Action:

IFAT and TGPWU urge the government to:

- ✓ Make data-sharing and aggregator contributions to social security mandatory.
- ✓ Launch nationwide awareness drives in partnership with worker unions.
- ✓ Ensure universalization of benefits under PM-JAY
- ✓ Implement ESIC benefits for Gig and Platform Workers without further delay.
- ✓ Enact a comprehensive Gig Workers' Law that guarantees fair wages, contracts, and collective bargaining rights.

We remain committed to advocating for fair working conditions, social security, and dignity for all Gig and Platform Workers in India.