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To

Shri Narendra Modi ji,
Prime Minister,
Government of India,
New Delhi

Date: 06.12.2021

Subject: Corporatization of Ordnance Factory Boards

Respected Shri Narendra Modi ji,

I write this letter to draw your attention to the escalating problems that have arisen as a result of the Government's decision to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and the arbitrary anti-workers' decisions being made by the Management of the 7 new Corporations. Despite numerous representations by the All India Defence Employees' Federation (AIDEF) and myself to the Hon'ble Defence Minister, unfortunately no action has been taken.

In spite of widespread opposition to the Corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board, which employs over 70,000 people, the Union Government decided to push ahead with its plan. It is deeply unfortunate that instead of using the plethora of experience available within the erstwhile OFB to improve their functioning, the Government opted to rely on the advice of a private consultancy firm. The OFBs in their very mandate were envisaged to be strategic entities that were focused on national security rather than commercial profits. This very core idea has been shattered by the unplanned and haphazard decision to corporatize these entities with the aim to increase commercial profits while compromising on their original mandate of national security.

Further, even post this 'transformation', the Government has failed to ensure any coherent plan or strategy to revamp these strategic entities. At present, the only strategic plan appears to be to impose service conditions that are in direct contradiction to the guarantees made to the employees and thereby infringe upon their rights. Unfortunately, in the first month of this move, the new Management has arbitrarily and unilaterally decided to alter the service conditions of the Employees including Working Hours, Overtime Allowances, Medical Benefits amongst many others. Further, the coming to a standstill of various Industrial Relation Machineries such as JCM Councils at the Unit Level and Directorate level have resulted in the alienation of employees from the Department.

As the Department of Defence Production embarks on this new phase, it is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that the rights and interests of the Employees are protected in accordance with the guarantees made to them. These Employees have made exemplary contributions to the defence of India and they must not be treated in an unjust manner.

Having received no response from the Ministry of Defence, I am compelled to seek your urgent intervention in this matter and ensure that the management of the 7 Corporations do not take unilateral decisions that go against the assurances given to employees. I further urge you to ensure that the above-mentioned Industrial Relation Machineries are activated at the earliest so as to provide a platform for employees to share their grievances. Most importantly, I urge you to provide clarity on the future plan of the new corporates and how the original mandate of the OFB will be fulfilled to the AIDEF as they represent the interests of the employees.

Yours sincerely

Binoy Viswam

Leader of CPI Parliamentary Party &
Secretary, National Council

Member, Standing Committee on Railways