

# Weekly Livelihoods Update

19 June 2018

- ✚ **Trade Union Status for Domestic Worker's Organization:** According to a report in the Hindu, Paschimbanga Griha Paricharika Samit, a Kolkata-based workers' organisation was granted a trade union certificate from the state government. It was the first organization of domestic workers to be granted such status in the State. There are only two laws in the country that grant domestic workers 'labour' status. First, Unorganised Labour Social Security Act, 2008 and second, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013. But none of the laws talks about any legal framework regarding rights of domestic workers. In the light of this, granting trade union status to domestic workers' union is a milestone for those working in the unorganised sector, say experts and activists. (Visit <https://thewire.in/rights/in-a-first-kolkata-domestic-workers-organisation-gets-trade-union-status> for further reading).
- ✚ **Maharashtra's War on Plastic:** On 15 March 2018,<sup>1</sup> the Maharashtra state cabinet passed a decision to ban single-use plastics. This includes items such as thermocol plates, small polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles, flexes and plastic cutlery. This was neither the first state-wide plastic ban in India, nor was it a first for Maharashtra. With this ban, Maharashtra joined a list of over 18 states in the country, which have imposed a partial or complete ban on single-use plastics. A brief investigation into the effects of the plastic ban in Maharashtra reveals that such regulations are riddled with arbitrariness and the absence of any accurate assessment of the scale of the problem of plastic waste. Further, such bans have the unintended consequence of creating a downturn in the plastic recycling sector, a sector which—in the absence of municipal support—handles much of the plastic waste of urban centres like Mumbai. But, there is still no clarity on the many inputs to the recycling industry that stand to be banned. This affects thousands of workers and recycling unit owners across the state. Despite their presence for well over 50 years, recycling clusters in Mumbai have been ignored, and their contribution to waste management and sustainability in the regional economy has been discounted. Irrespective of the way in which the ban is implemented, the cost of such arbitrary decisions and cavalier environmentalism will be borne by workers who are losing their livelihood. (Visit <https://www.epw.in/journal/2018/24/commentary/maharashtras-war-plastic.html> for further reading)

- ✚ **Rice Becomes Less Nutritious If There's More Carbon Dioxide in the Air** : Rice could produce fewer proteins, vitamins and minerals essential for humans in response to rising carbon dioxide concentrations that are implicated in global warming, new research assessments from 10 countries that consume the most rice has shown. The findings not only confirm previously reported declines in protein, iron and zinc levels but also offer additional information on consistent declines in vitamins B1, B2, B5, and B9 and – conversely – an increase in vitamin E in rice produced under higher carbon dioxide conditions. And they add to the general concern over global warming impacting food and nutritional security. (Visit <https://thewire.in/environment/rice-becomes-less-nutritious-if-theres-more-carbon-dioxide-in-the-air> for further reading)
- ✚ **Farmers Sow Unapproved Monsanto Cotton Seeds**: Many Indian farmers are openly sowing an unapproved variety of genetically modified (GM) cotton seeds developed by Monsanto to boost their incomes. Union environment ministry said last year planting the seeds violated the Environment Protection Act, and farmers who did so were risking potential jail terms. (Visit <https://thewire.in/agriculture/risking-arrest-farmers-sow-unapproved-monsanto-cotton-seeds> for further reading)
- ✚ **Marginalized Fishing Community**: The marginalised fishing community of Thoothukudi conflicts with land today. As the sea and beaches are inextricably linked to their lives, any move detrimental to the fragile marine ecology on which they have been sustaining for generations also disturbs their lives. Heavy industries and development activities on the shores began pushing the indigenous people away from the beaches, leading to frequent public disorder. The coastline became a dumping yard for poisonous waste that has transformed the landscape for the worse, besides polluting the air and groundwater. Even beach sands are scooped out and looted for minerals, making the community virtual “environment refugees” in their own habitats. The competitive environment forced traditional fishers out and made them mere labourers in the giant fishing vessels manned by multinationals. At a time when the fishermen at Thoothukudi are struggling to come to terms with the falling catches, they are also forced to face the ill-effects of a rise in polluting industrial activity. (Visit <https://www.frontline.in/cover-story/sense-of-betrayal/article10108722.ece> for further reading)
- ✚ **Sandstorm in the desert**: On May 4, the SC turned down the Vasundhara Raje government's plea to relax its total ban on sand mining imposed in November last year. Justice M.B. Lokur reiterated that mining could be permitted only after a

scientific assessment of the ecological impact and the rate of sand replenishment, deferring the case to July. A day earlier, the Rajasthan High Court directed all district collectors to set up special teams to prevent sand mining across the state. Affecting more than a million livelihoods in the mining and construction sectors, the ban has become a major cause of unrest against the government in Rajasthan. It's also impacting the public as sand and gravel prices have spiralled. (Visit <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/states/story/20180625-sandstorm-in-the-desert-1261115-2018-06-17> for further reading)

- + **Paytm Data Controversy:** In a sting operation conducted by the online investigative portal Cobrapost, the controversy over e-payments company Paytm's alleged sharing of user data with the government raises larger concerns about digital data privacy. While the company later denied sharing any information with third parties, the reputation of this start-up, which saw overnight success, has suffered a nosedive. (Visit <https://www.frontline.in/the-nation/stinging-facts/article10108711.ece?homepage=true> for further reading).
- + **RERA:** The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, or RERA, was expected to clear up India's murky real estate sector. Across India, about 25,000 real estate projects have been registered under RERA, said a study by Knight Frank. However, about 62 per cent of these projects are in one state—Maharashtra. Unorganised real estate players, who do not have the business model in place to meet the strict requirements of RERA, far outnumber the organised developers in the sector. (Visit <https://www.theweek.in/theweek/business/2018/06/16/rera-is-still-a-work-in-progress.html> for further reading).