9 Controlling journeys, controlling labour

COVID-19 and migrants

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Introduction

The complete lockdown announced by the prime minister of India on 24 March 2020 was followed by episodes of hundreds of thousands of migrants defying the lockdown and walking towards their home, sometimes covering more than a thousand kilometres. These journeys not only exposed the vulnerabilities of migrant labourers but also brought the issue of their return into political discourse. However, the majority of workers, particularly long-distance ones, remained stranded for want of public transport. The media extensively reported their ordeal at the destination and their protests in different parts of the country demanding return journey. Questions were asked as to why the Government of India did not anticipate the mass exodus of inter-state and intra-state migrants before announcing the lockdown. Why did the government not give a one-week window for the migrants to return to their homes by public transport, particularly trains, when the case-load of coronavirus was minuscule?¹ Why did the government take the risk of alienating this vast number of the workforce of the country despite India being an electoral democracy?

The chapter attempts to engage with these questions by using the concept of labour-control regime. The analyses of various events and incidents during the pandemic illustrate how the regime of labour control is embedded in the state's strategy of dealing with the pandemic which shaped the state's policy towards journeys of migrants. We discuss how the state's strategy of labour control has created a crisis of legitimacy for the state and given rise to new conflicts that define the emerging state-labour relations. We also look at various measures by the state aimed at exerting control over labour which will have far-reaching consequences for state-labour relations.

Labour-control regime: How the state and capital strategise?

The labour-control regime refers to the social need in capitalism for integrating labour into the production system and labour processes by a variety of means, directly and coercively, as well as indirectly and reciprocally (Jonas 2009). Various factors facilitate workers' integration – knowing the employer, social networks around the place/region, developing skill in the work, specific practices such as employer allowing the workers to use the workplace as accommodation, caste- and region-based recruitment, and the presence of a labour contractor.

Labour control is easier particularly when the labour market has migrants and casual workers, production takes place outside of the organised sector, where trade unions are weak or absent, and labour market allows flexibility in terms of sub-contracting and flexible work schedules. Labour control also demands that state regulations be weak, allowing unregulated terms and conditions of employment, unwritten contract, with weak oversight and redressal system for abuses of labour rights. The fragmentation of production processes at multiple layers through work process sub-contracting has made labour relations complicated in which employers turn out to be distant and invisible. Violation of workers' rights is easier in the absence of a clear lineage of accountability. The control regime is premised on the understanding that the protection regime, its nemesis, is antithetical to ease of business, which in turn is construed as a *sine qua non* for attracting big-ticket investments, particularly foreign direct investments. In a capitalist economy, the state works on behalf of capital to ensure a conducive institutional environment. It uses regulation as a function of control, a crucial tool for establishing a regime of labour control.

The labour control is exercised through the institutional measures aimed at incorporating labour either through restriction or through co-option (Fishwick 2018). Institutional co-option measures are less explicitly authoritarian and intended to domesticate labour (O'Donnell 1988). Capital and regime friendly trade unions, the network of labour contractors, and co-opting labour relations through caste, kinship, region, religion, and other identity markers contribute to creating disciplined and docile labour in non-conflictual ways. Other ways of co-option are re-organisation of the workplace to make it informal, employer's paternalistic relations with the labour and social welfare measures by the state. However, for the state, the most crucial role lies in creating a restrictive institutional environment through various institutional measures involving various arms of the state – legislative, juridical, and executive. The most common measures are legal restrictions on organising, mobilising, and

representing workers, dilution of wages and collective bargaining rights, removal of legal protections, and autonomy to the employer in exercising labour control practices (Fishwick 2018). State violence is integral to it as the state often resorts to using brute force to create a general sense of fear for seeking compliance, and whenever there are protests and resistance against its agenda.

In the following pages, drawing from published empirical accounts in newspapers and news portals, we intend to discuss the configuration of control over migrants' return exercised by the state and employers through state and private institutions during the pandemic.

The first wave of workers' return migration

Let us return to the question – did the government not anticipate the exodus of migrant workers when it announced a very stringent lockdown from the midnight of 24 March? The sequence of events, reported in newspapers, television channels, and news portals strongly suggests otherwise. Below we try to reconstruct the chronology of some important events to make our point.

With the declaration of COVID-19 a national disaster on 14 March, most of the state governments instructed shutting of multiplexes, cinema halls, educational institutions till 31 March. By this time, jobs had started dwindling as factories, shops and establishments, transport, construction, and service sector were either closing or reducing the scale of their activities. Workers were staring at an uncertain future. They feared for their lives as they continued to live and work in too crowded conditions and, hence, unable to follow instructions like 'social distancing.'

The exodus of migrant labour from megacities had started quite early. Newspapers reported large crowds at the Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, and other railway stations. Many of them had the stamp of 'quarantine' on their hands. On 21 March, the *Indian Express* reported how in the aftermath of Maharashtra government's order to shut down shops and establishments until 31 March, the exodus began in Mumbai and Pune with tens of thousands of workers lining up at ticket counters and gathering on platforms as they waited for trains to take them home, mostly in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.²

A similar multi-city report on 21 March 2020 carried out by the news portal, Scroll.in reported widespread return of migrants from various cities as the migrant workers faced the prospect of increasing loss of livelihoods, hunger, fast depleting savings, and uncertain futures.³ On the next day, 22 March, a news item in the *Indian Express* reported similar situation from cities like Chennai, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kochi, Mumbai, Pune, and

Delhi. Migrants feared that the Railways could potentially switch off their services.⁴

Unaware of the Centre's plans, the Central Railway announced to run special trains, mostly with sleeper and unreserved coaches, to the eastern and northern parts of the country to deal with the rush for the return journey by migrants. However, to mark the Prime Minister's call for Janata Curfew, the Railways cancelled all 3,700 trains across the country scheduled for departure between 21 March, midnight, and 10 pm on 22 March.

That the political establishment knew the exodus had already begun is corroborated by the fact that ahead of the Janata Curfew on 22 March, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to the migrants on 20 March, 'I appeal to my brothers and sisters who are moving to their villages over the fear of the coronavirus to stay where you are for the next few days. Travelling in the crowd increases the risk of the virus spreading. It puts at risk the people from your villages, and will add to the difficulties of your families'.⁵ It would have been anybody's guess that migrants would attempt to get home if they lost their job or means of livelihood. Clearly, despite the evolving migrant crisis, the prime minister decided to go ahead with announcing the nationwide lockdown, perhaps the strictest in the world. By assuring people of winning the war against the epidemic in 21 days, the government was projecting COVID-19 as a short-term disaster, so that migrant workers need not leave their workplace. We contend that the sequence of events from pre-lockdown to post-lockdown till date, as we will discuss later, clearly establish the state's efforts to control the labour but without any accountability of their well-being. More than the spread of the virus, a future spectre of labour shortage was haunting the capital and the government.

Our argument is based on four observations: first, the electoral promises of the Modi government to overhaul 'restrictive' labour laws in India to align with its slogan of 'Make in India' and 'Ease of Business'. The government had proposed drastic changes in the existing labour laws and amalgamating 44 central labour laws into four labour codes. The Parliament had already passed the Code on Wages before the pandemic; the rest three were passed during the lockdown. The pandemic provided the right opportunity to push labour reforms with little possibility of opposition, particularly on the streets. Second, the government was on a privatisation spree of the existing public sector companies. Besides being an important economic agenda of the government, privatisation promised to be a vital source for generating revenues in the backdrop of the state's inability to raise revenues under the new Goods and Services Tax. Sweeping changes in industrial relations were deemed necessary to create a trouble-free private labour market and market-labour relations. Third, the sickeningly unsafe living conditions in workers habitats incompatible with 'social distancing', lack of substantive savings

by migrants given their low earnings (Pushpendra and Singh 2020), and the hostile middle class (Jha and Deeksha 2021) cannot be addressed in short-run, that too during an epidemic. That migrants' well-being does not matter and they are disposable did reflect in the Garib Kalyan Yojana which did not provide direct cash support to migrants. Besides, the existing social security architecture does not offer any substantive support during disasters. There was little room for any co-option measure. Fourth, a general lack of clarity about the virus which led the establishment to believe it as a short-term epidemic. In the backdrop of an ailing economy, on a steep downward slope, the government and the private capital were anxious to ensure availability of labour immediately after the lockdown was relaxed and eventually lifted.

The strategy of control over labour through control over return journey of migrants gradually became apparent, particularly in the next phase, starting with the complete lockdown from 25 March. How the state and its institutions changed from largely passive observers to active enforcers of control regime will be discussed in the subsequent pages.

Exodus after lockdown: The second wave

While the migrants were gradually leaving the cities, the announcement of a 'curfew-like' lockdown proved to be the tipping point. Migrants defied the lockdown and started to flee the cities. The most haunting images that all of us confronted were of those lakhs of migrants who, in the absence of any public transport, trekked hundreds and, in innumerable cases, even more than a thousand of kilometres. Forced upon them, these were perilous journeys – by foot, on the bicycle, hiding in trucks or tankers, along railway tracks, or using a mix of all these and several others means, without or with little money and food. As the receiving states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal looked helpless and inadequately prepared to respond to the unfolding humanitarian crisis, the Centre asked state governments and union territories to seal borders to stop the movement of migrant workers effectively. Migrants encountered emergence of unanticipated new borders, officials with an obsession to contain the contagion through travelling body/spreader, accidents, and death. The instances of travelling workers beaten up, sprayed with disinfectant chemicals, and harassed and harangued by lockdown enforcing hostile administration on highways, city/town borders, and zones were abounding as they had supposedly disturbed the lockdown prescription, the disease containment plan, and other control mechanisms. The Centre had clearly asked for anyone on the roads to be treated as a violator of the lockdown, leaving them vulnerable to more mistreatment and violence from the state.⁶

Though Delhi and Uttar Pradesh governments initially took a lenient view on the transfer of inter-state workers from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh (and also Bihar), the Centre on 29 March instructed to effectively seal the district and state borders and not to allow any movement of people across cities or on highways.⁷ Following this, the DGP of Haryana stated that those travelling by foot on highways and roads ‘should be picked up, placed in buses and left in localities from where they started’. He went on to say that big indoor stadiums or other similar facilities be turned into ‘temporary jails’ so that people who refused to obey the lawful directions of district administration could be arrested and placed in custody for the offence committed by them under the Disaster Management Act.⁸ Numerous control mechanisms were put in operation through a series of notifications.

On 29 March, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), issued an order⁹ that all the employers, be it in the industry or the shops and commercial establishments, shall make payment of wages of their workers, at their workplaces, on the due date, without any deduction, for the period their establishments are under closure during the lockdown. However, a rapid survey by Safe in India and Agrasar (n.d.) of 100 migrant workers, who had decided to stay back in Gurugram, revealed that around 75 per cent of the workers were not paid for April which was a ‘massive worsening’ over March 2020, for which around 25 per cent did not receive their full wages in clear violation of the government order.¹⁰ Newspaper reports suggest that such violations were the rule rather than an exception. Later, on 4 June, the Supreme Court ordered not to take any coercive action against employers concerning the MHA order mentioned above. Legal validity apart, the order seemed to be designed to fail, at best as camouflage for the state’s unwillingness to adopt any co-option measure for workers.

The state’s intention to aggressively follow restrictive measures was evident not only in controlling the transport but also in its other measures. The prime minister had set up a COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force on 19 March to create an emergency package. The package, announced on 25 March, focused on domicile-based relief and had hardly anything for migrants stranded at the destination.¹¹ The government knew that most of the social security schemes did not have portability provisions. A good example is the fund available under the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Boards. The Centre directed the states to support construction workers from the fund. However, due to domicile-based registration and the absence of portability, migrants had little access to the funds. In Bihar, for example, the state government did not register any new construction worker under the fund after the Centre’s directive. Only those migrant workers who had prior-registration in the state could get Rs. 2,000

transferred by the state board. However, in the absence of disaggregated data, there is no way to know the exact number of beneficiary migrants.¹²

The institution of judiciary supplemented the regime of labour control in several instances of omission and commission in its approach to the migrant issue. In response to a petition seeking relief for migrants attempting to return home during the 21-day lockdown, the Supreme Court accepted the Centre's submission that there were no migrant workers on the roads 'as of 11 am on 31 March', and they had all been taken to the nearest available shelter. The Court did not even feel the need to verify facts independently. Moreover, the Court expressed satisfaction with the steps taken by the government and declined to intervene. The court even went to the extent of saying that the migrants' exodus was due to the panic created by fake news.¹³

While police everywhere turned ruthless in controlling the mobility of migrants, protests erupted at several places, sometimes turning violent. On 30 March, the situation took a violent turn in Surat when police tried to stop about 500 textile factory workers who were mostly migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. On 10 April, 80 migrant labourers were arrested in Lakshana area of Surat for defying the lockdown and going on a rampage. The workers were demanding that they be handed over their wages and allowed to return to Odisha, their home state. Most of these workers were employees of the power loom textile factories which had been shut and were not paying the workers their daily wages.¹⁴

Hoping that trains would resume on 14 April after the end of the 3-week lockdown, at least 3,000 migrant workers gathered at Bandra station in Mumbai, but the police dispersed them by using force.¹⁵ On 27 April, a group of construction workers protested and pelted stones at the office of Dream City Diamond Bourse in Surat. Alleging that they were made to work amid coronavirus lockdown, workers demanded that they be sent back to their native places. The state government had permitted construction to go ahead with conditions applied in order to meet the revised target date of completion of the project by March 2021.¹⁶

Even in rural areas, migrants were put under confinement and forced to work. A case in Bardoli in South Gujarat was reported of sugarcane harvesters who were not allowed to return to their villages after completing their work for one sugar factory by another factory which was facing a shortage of labour. In order to avoid disruption in production, the district administration allowed sugar factories to send lorries to various villages across the Dang district to transport workers back to the fields, but the same administration would not let workers go back home.¹⁷

As the above narratives suggest, the fact that the state went in full force to restrict the mobility of migrants even without a contingency plan to address their immediate vulnerabilities, demonstrates how migrants have no power

to put constraints on the state policy. Instead, they are subject to the exercise of state power, in its most callous and violent forms. It also exposed the fragmentation of labour and their organisation. Did the state lose legitimacy before labour? What did the state achieve through restrictive policy when ultimately it had to loosen restrictions on mobility? There are analytical limitations on answers to these questions, as the impact of state action will take a longer time to unfold.

The third wave of the return journey: New tricks of control

The Centre announced Shramik special trains from 1 May on May Day. However, the journey was highly controlled, and the system was procedurally complicated, migrant unfriendly, and created confusion. The unprepared, hence reluctant, receiving states gave consent for a limited number of trains. Then arose the issue of who will pay the train fare. Initially the fare, with a corona surcharge of Rs. 50, was collected from the workers. Later, state governments agreed to pay the fare. The Railways, which could run more than 12,000 trains every day before the pandemic, ran just a few hundred for months. On top of it, the routes of some trains were diverted delaying their journeys by several additional days. Moreover, inadequate food and water arrangements added to the woes of the passengers. Ninety-six passengers reportedly died during the train journeys.¹⁸

This approach of the government was in sharp contrast to the usual approach of the state regarding workers journey. The state has been interventionist in expediting the journey of workers by facilitating journeys of migrants from labour surplus areas to labour deficient areas or areas/sectors/industries that prefer migrant labour. When the Green Revolution was introduced in the mid-sixties in selected regions of the country, it introduced new trains to specifically ensure functional connectivity between source and destination geographies (Das 1992). An elaborate but systematic rail and road network operated to ensure the smooth supply of cheap labour for meeting the demands of several sectors in the cities and also rural areas. At the same time, the state has remained *non-interventionist* in various dimensions of labour life worlds such as rental housing market, wages, labour welfare, and their working and living conditions which remain firmly in the grip of the market mechanism. Both measures of intervention and non-intervention are selective. The state's facilitating role of labour's journey in the pre-corona times, and its muted response to the issue of their return journey during corona times, served the same purpose – controlling the labour flow for the industry.

The influence of builders' lobby that prompted the Karnataka government to cancel the special train for the stranded migrants is another example

of how the anxiety of the capital prevailed over migrants' right to return home. Following a meeting between the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India (CREDAI), Karnataka and Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa, the state government wrote to the Railways cancelling all inter-state trains from Karnataka. The CM told that the state was looking to restart its construction sector, for which migrant labourers were the backbone. An exodus would have affected the sector. Bengaluru MP Tejasvi Surya hailed the decision as a 'bold' move to help migrants 'restart their dreams' in the city. Subsequently, labour agitations and even some confrontation with the police were reported across the city. It is to be noted that between 3 May and 5 May, the state government received online registration on its portal from over 2.13 lakh migrant workers for their return journey by train. The state government finally relented and formally requested the Railways for at least 14 trains between 8 May and 15 May to key sending states.¹⁹

Legislative route to labour control during the pandemic

Controlling the journey was also accompanied by making changes in labour laws through ordinance routes. At least ten states, including Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, Maharashtra, Goa, Punjab, and Uttarakhand, have changed their labour laws by amending provisions or suspending some others. The changes allow industries in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh to force labourers to work 72 hours a week, an increase of 24 hours from the earlier stipulated 48 hours. In effect, a labourer could be forced to work up to 12 hours a day on 6 working days of a week, from an earlier schedule of eight hours a day. That went against the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on hours of work to which India is a signatory.²⁰ In Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, the industries were not even required to pay 'overtime' to labourers working in the factories. Except for Haryana, all other states announced this change to be in force for three months. Gujarat announced that except for laws pertaining to the payment of minimum wages, safety norms and compensation for workers in case of industrial accidents, no other provisions of the labour law would apply to all new companies that wished to operate in the state for at least 1,200 days, and for those that had already been operational for that period. The state government also offered land and infrastructure for companies and projects that were looking to shift base from China.²¹ These measures shed light on the approach of state governments on state-labour relations which are headed towards extreme exploitation of labour.

However, more extensive labour reforms, with far-reaching consequences, came in the form of three new labour codes passed on 23 September

by the Parliament – Industrial Relations Code, Code on Social Security, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code. The scope of the chapter does not allow us to discuss the merits of these codes in detail. However, it is worth noting that all labour unions of the country have vehemently opposed them for imposing legal restrictions on organising and representing workers and their collective bargaining rights, for removing several legal protections and bestowing enormous power to employers to exercise labour-control practices. On the crucial Industrial Relations Code, Sundar (2020) suggests that it will fail to create a conducive and efficient industrial relations environment, and will neither promote the ease of doing business nor serve workers' welfare. These three codes, together with the Code on Wages, have not only dashed any hope for workers rights and decent work condition but also given a massive push towards further flexibilisation of work and employment.

Conclusion

This chapter engages with the idea and strategies of controlling the flow of migrants' return journey which has so far been a neglected subject. As Samaddar (2020: 44) points out, 'In the annals of migration the issue of return was never given importance to the degree attention was paid to the issue of entry and work, whether in refugee and migration literature or in the discussion on racism and xenophobia that makes migrants the victim within a country'. Controlling the onward journey of internal migrants is likely to be an act of son-of-the-soil politics or xenophobia or competition between local and outside workers – more associated with the social and political domain. However, the capital and, for its sake, the state seek to ensure the flow of incoming workers. The return journey must follow a predictable pattern which is often based on trade-offs between the interests of the capital and labour, with the balance heavily tilted towards the former. Any exodus threatens to disrupt the predictable pattern triggering the need for control measures.

The pandemic and resultant exodus presented a real possibility of disrupting the pattern. The government could effectively control the return journey, which exposed the fragmentation of labour and their vastly diminished power to exercise constraints on the state policy. The proliferation of work outside the organised sector has created the ground for this situation. The state could get away with virtually disowning the responsibility of feeding, safety, and security of migrants in cities, making them further pauperised and traumatised. Legislative and legal institutions have further strengthened the labour-control regime. The state has been successful in creating a new labour-state relation that marks an end to the rhetoric of labour welfarism.

However, the state's attempts to control migrants' return journeys and also fundamentally change the state-labour relations through newer control mechanisms have met with resistance and struggles of migrants. Their silent defiance of the lockdown has also exposed limitations of the state's capacity to enforce complete control over workers' decision-making and their body. As the impact of the labour-control regime will gradually unfold its impact in the times ahead, we may witness a renewed and sustained struggle between the state and market forces on the one side and migrants and other workers on the other.

Notes

- 1 On 24 March, the total number of infected persons in the country was only 564 and the chances of spread of the virus by the journey of migrant workers were negligible.
- 2 Siddique, Iram, Ajay Jadhav. 2020. "Covid-19: Exodus from Mumbai, Pune as migrant workers pack trains headed East." *The Indian Express*, March 21. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/coronavirus/coronavirus-india-mumbai-pune-migrant-workers-6324722/>. *The Indian Express*. Accessed on 10 October 2020.
- 3 Daniyal, Shoaib, Supriya Sharma and Naresh Fernandes. 2020. "As Covid-19 pandemic hits India's daily-wage earners hard, some leave city for their home towns." *The Indian Express*, March 21. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/956779/starvation-will-kill-us-before-corona-the-covid-19-pandemic-has-hit-indias-working-class-hard>. Accessed on 10 October 2020.
- 4 Varma, Vishnu, Rahul V Pisharody, Janardhan Koushik, Tora Agarwala. 2020. "COVID-19: As migrant workers return home, how different states are feeling the pinch." *The Indian Express*, March 22. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/coronavirus-migrant-workers-kerala-bengal-tamil-nadu-6326896/>. Accessed on 10 October 2020.
- 5 Express Web Desk. 2020. "'Stay wherever you are to stop coronavirus': PM's fresh appeal ahead of 'Janata curfew'." *The Indian Express*. March 21. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/coronavirus/coronavirus-pm-modi-appeals-people-to-stay-where-you-are-ahead-of-janata-curfew-6325761/>. Accessed on 10 October 2020.
- 6 Express Web Desk. 2020. "Exodus of migrants, death on roads, relief package: Week 1 highlights of India lockdown." *The Indian Express*, April 1. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/coronavirus/coronavirus-india-lockdown-week-1-highlights-migrants-6342355/>. Accessed on 24 October 2020.
- 7 The Wire Staff. 2020. "'Seal All Borders': Centre Decides to Stop Long Walk Home of Migrant Labourers." *The Wire*, March 29. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/government/centre-migrant-labourers-walk-lockdown>. Accessed on 24 October 2020.
- 8 The Wire Staff. 2020. "With Temporary Shelters, Haryana and UP Try to Stop Migrant Labourers From Walking to Villages." *The Wire*, March 30. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/rights/with-temporary-shelters-haryana-and-up-try-to-stop-migrant-labourers-from-walking-to-villages>. Accessed on 24 October 2020.

- 9 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 29 March 2020.
- 10 Safe in India and Agrasar. N.D. "Unworthy (Who will pay the April Salaries of Migrant Workers Now?). Retrieved from https://60d15elf-27ff-4be1-8827-f7f0b5f74084.filesusr.com/ugd/5d022b_97c80265b3994b6e95792dc304b4f4a8.pdf. Accessed on 25 October 2020.
- 11 Before the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana was announced, the Working People's Charter, a network of organisations working with informal sector workers, on 22 March urged the Centre to create an emergency fund of Rs. 50,000 crore to provide social and economic support to workers in the informal sector. The demand included, among others, food package for at least three months and an 'immediate cash transfer' of Rs. 10,000 for one month to all types of workers and agricultural farmers. It also urged the Centre to impose a ban in reduction of workforce in small and medium enterprises, arrangements to freeze any kind of eviction notices for homes and mortgage payments, and suspending utility bills for a period of at least two months. For details see, <https://workingpeoplescharter.in/main-pages/pandemic-and-impact/>. Accessed on 12 October 2020.
- 12 Based on authors' query with a senior officer of the Department of Labour Resources, Government of Bihar (name is not disclosed for the sake of confidentiality).
- 13 Scroll Staff. 2020. "Coronavirus: 'No migrant workers on roads as of 11 am,' Centre tells Supreme Court." *Scroll.in*, March 31. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/latest/957784/coronavirus-no-migrant-workers-on-roads-as-of-11-am-centre-tells-supreme-court>. Accessed on 22 October 2020.
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- 15 Shantha, Sukanya. 2020. "'Let us Go Home': No Sign of Relief in PM's Speech, Migrant Workers Take to Mumbai Streets." *The Wire*, April 14. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/labour/mumbai-bandra-migrant-covid-19>. Accessed on 24 October 2020.
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- 20 International Labour Organisation. N.D. "Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)." Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029. Accessed on 18 October 2020.

- 21 Umarji, Vinay. 2020. "After UP, Gujarat Offers 1,200-Day Labour Law Exemptions for New Industrial Investments." *The Wire*, May 9. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/economy/gujarat-labour-law-exemption-new-industries-covid-19>. Accessed on 18 October 2020.

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