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## Government's sinister move to demolish CGHS by linking with Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA)

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The Modi Government is bent upon to demolish all Institutions build over a period of time. The 220 years old Indian Ordnance Factories proudly called as the Fourth Force of the Defence of our Country is already splintered into 7 Corporations and Post Corporatization the Ordnance Factories are suffering without sufficient work and the future of the employees is in stake. The AIDEF has already challenged the unilateral decision of the Government. Privatization in Railways is in its peak. Selling of Public Sector industries and selling the National Assets in the name of National Monetization pipe line are all certain examples. The Health sector is also under severe threat. Government sector Health facilities, Pharmaceutical industries are all under attack. Medical care has become more expensive for the common man. Only the private Medical insurance companies and the Private Corporate Hospitals are the beneficiaries.

The recent attack of the Government is on the Central Government Health Scheme which is basically meant for Central Government Employees and Pensioners. The Central Government Pensioners Associations and the Trade Unions are furious against a recent Circular issued by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare on 28th of March 2024. According to this Circular issued by Health Ministry it has now become mandatory for the CGHS beneficiaries including the Central Government Pensioners to link the CGHS ID card with the Government of India Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA). This has been a topic of discussion in social media and opinions against this are being expressed by the employees and Senior Citizens about the motive of the Government towards this step. The Ministry of Health has failed to take the JCM Staff Side and the Pensioners Associations into confidence before taking such policy decision which have serious implications.

The Central Government Health Scheme CGHS is a Health Care Facility Scheme available to the Central Government Employees and Pensioners. There are CGHS Wellness Centres in 80 Cities/Towns. Apart from the Central Government Employees & Pensioners the

scheme covers former Vice Presidents, Governors, Members of Parliament, Judges of the High Courts & Supreme Courts & Freedom Fighters including Family members. It is a contributory scheme in which the beneficiaries have to make a monthly contribution during their entire service and Annual/ Life time lump sum payment for availing medical treatment for Self and Family members in CGHS empanelled Private Hospitals. There are many short comings in the CGHS which the Parliamentary Standing Committees have also pointed out such as shortage of Doctors and Staffs in the existing CGHS Wellness Centers, Non-Establishment of CGHS Wellness Centres in all the Districts/Town, shortage of medicines and other requirements, many Private Multispecialty Hospital opting out of CGHS Empanelment, refusal by the empanelled Hospitals to give cashless treatment, over charging from the patients etc.,.

Despite all these problems CGHS is the only solution for the medical requirement of the Central Government Employees and Pensioners. Linking the CGHS with ABHA is no doubt a planned sinister move by the Government to dismantle the CGHS in due course of time and to force the Government employees to only depend upon the Government Hospitals which are already overloaded since there also the problems such as shortage of Doctors, Staffs and infrastructure etc., are in existence.

Already the Government Employees are in deep trouble after the introduction of the no guarantee NPS Pension Scheme to the Central Government Employees who are recruited on or after 01.01.2004 with no guaranteed Pension to take care of the old age life. For them atleast the CGHS is there to take care of their Health problems after retirement. Adding salt to the wound the Government is now planning to take away the CGHS benefit by linking the same with ABHA. In ABHA the maximum coverage of Medical Treatment is only upto Rs.5,00,000/- (Rupees Five Lakhs only) per citizen. Whereas in CGHS there is no such limits. In ABHA the premium is paid by the Government and in

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case of CGHS the retired employees are paying their Subscription/Premium as lump sum well in advance. Therefore neither the employees nor the Pensioners can allow any sinister move to demolish the CGHS. The Honorable Supreme Court has upheld in many cases that the Government employees and the Pensioner are eligible for free treatment and whatever the Hospitals are charging should be reimbursed by the Government. In a recent Historical Judgement the Supreme Court has directed the Government that the CGHS Medical Treatment rates should be made applicable to all the Private Hospitals in the Country. In any case this decision of the Government needs to be withdrawn, otherwise the employees and Pensioners will be left with

no other option than to agitate and protest against the unilateral decision taken by the Government of India. The Government instead of attempting to demolish the CGHS should implement the recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee by establishing CGHS Wellness Center in all Districts, appointment of Doctors and Staffs, expansion of the Facilities in the Wellness Centers, to ensure availability of all types of Medicines and other requirements etc., Government should also revise the Treatment/Procedures rates regularly so that more and more Private Multispecialty Hospital apply for empanelment, regular payment of the dues to the Hospitals so that the Hospitals don't refuse Cashless Medical Treatment to the Central Government Employees and Pensioners. ■