9.1 **INTRODUCTION**

The present chapter, being the concluding chapter of this Thesis, brings together the conceptual, theoretical and analytical strands in the preceding chapters and presents the conclusions of this investigation together with the suggestions emanating therefrom.

9.2 **PROFILES OF TRUCK DRIVERS**

This research work is mainly based on the analysis and interpretation of the primary data collected through survey method from a sample of 500 respondent truck drivers in Solapur District. The analytical exercise has enabled the drawing of the representative profiles in the various facets of a truck driver’s personality, such as: (i) personal profile, (ii) family profile, (iii) vehicle and employer profile, (iv) working profile, (v) vehicle accident profile, and (vi) life-style profile.

9.2.1 **Personal Profile**

The study of the ages of the truck drivers shows that 74% drivers are in the age group of 21 to 40 years. After crossing the age of 50, very few drivers remain in this occupation. These drivers have started their occupation as a crew (truck attendant) at the age of 14 to 16 years, and after completing the age of 50 years, they become local drivers.

Solapur district is dominated by Maratha, Lingayat and Dhangar communities and other castes are found in minority. So, most of the drivers are found from Maratha community with Marathi as their mother tongue. Earlier, the transporation occupation was dominated by the Muslim community, but now only 14.40% drivers are Muslims.

Presently, the occupation is no more dependent on the caste, because 51.80% drivers are from SC, ST, NT and OBC castes, which means that all castes are showing an occupational interest in it.

Even though Solapur district is situate on the borders of the States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the migrant drivers from these States have shown Marathi as their mother tongue. Most of the drivers prefer Hindi as their second language, because while operating the vehicle on the inter-State routes, they have to communicate in Hindi language.

The fathers of 59.40% truck drivers are illiterate, whereas only 14% truck drivers’
fathers were educated upto 10th Standard. It means that the fathers of the truck drivers who are in this occupation today were unable to give them good upbringing (Samskaras) or good education because of the circumstances. Same thing probably happened with the present truck drivers whose fathers were truck drivers themselves; hence, their children too were attracted towards this occupation. But it is also seen that 60% truck drivers are educated upto 10th Standard.

On the whole, in the entire study, not a single truck driver was found to be totally illiterate, which means that their next generation is on the road of educational progress.

9.2.2 Family Profile

The joint family system continues to prevail in India even today. As such, 45.20% truck drivers have adopted joint family system. These drivers do not have family tensions on their mind while driving the vehicle. But because of the joint family system, the responsibilities on the truck drivers are increased, which includes the responsibilities for the marriages of siblings, family expenses, etc. Nearly, 80% truck drivers living either in nuclear or joint families live in their own house. Nuclear family system is found mostly among the unorganized sector truck drivers.

In the joint family, the number of family members is usually between 6 to 11. It has been observed that in the truck drivers’ families, there is no control over the number of children. In many nuclear families, the number of children is more than two, while it was found that there are some unmarried drivers living in nuclear families.

An owner-cum-driver solely manages his own business. So the output is that the business is gained as his monthly income. Among these, 51.40% owner-cum-drivers’ monthly income is above Rs.15,000. The reason is that the owner can better concentrate on his transport activities and do the business efficiently.

The employed truck drivers have a monthly income between Rs.1,001 to 5,000. In organized business, the drivers are getting their payment on kilometre basis. The organized sector drivers have a practice of fair and efficient business. So, their income goes above Rs.5,000 per month.

In many truck drivers’ families, mother, father, brother and children also work as labourers to supplement the family income, because it is difficult to run the household solely on the payment received from driving.

Truck drivers are not illiterate, but because of the circumstances, 32.50% truck drivers children were found to be illiterate, while 39% children were educated only upto 10th standard. Even today, the truck drivers are not found to be inclined towards educating their children. The reason behind this is that in the truck driving occupation, he is always out of the home and hence, cannot concentrate on the home, nor can he arrange for the finance for his children’s further education. As such, the proportion of withdrawing the children after higher secondary education was found to be high.
Even the basic amenities needed for leading a reasonable social life are not available in the truck drivers’ families. In the absence of electricity, they use kerosene lanterns and depend on public wells and public taps for water. About 61.40% truck drivers’ homes do not have a latrine. It means that in the absence of the basic amenities in the family’s household, the truck drivers’ life is not self-sufficient.

Many truck drivers own agricultural land but it is not wholly irrigated. Around 52.60% truck drivers own land admeasuring about five acres, but the income derived from it is not much. As such, their overall standard of living does not seem to have enhanced.

After returning home from a longer trip, some truck drivers involve themselves in farming on family lands. They thus are adept in both farming and driving, but because of the lack of knowledge of any other professions, they do not seem to develop themselves.

9.2.3 Vehicle and Employee Profile

The life-style of a truck driver changes according to his occupation. The truck drivers engaged in local operations operate the vehicle for less kilometres and carry the goods locally. Since they return home everyday, they are in daily touch with the family and give more time to the family.

The drivers proceeding on longer trips take along with them a second driver and a truck cleaner. This crew is responsible for getting the load, safely transporting the goods from the sources to the destination at a right time, deriving the value of driving. Further, when two drivers are travelling together, one is playing a leadership role - he is managing the operational issues enroute, in consultation with the other driver. These enroute issues may include deciding the loads, destinations, routes, vehicle maintenance, facing various road enforcing agencies such as octroi and traffic.

The local drivers are wholly controlled by the owners. Long route driver is also controlled by the owners by communicating with him to give suggestions, but the major role is played by the driver only.

The monthly vehicle maintenance cost and the fuel consumption cost varies according to the number of kilometres operated and the vehicle model.

For being successful on the route in the truck driving business, the owner of the local truck driver directly or indirectly manages the matters. As such, it is found that the responsibility of the local driver is less than that of the long route driver.

9.2.4 Working Profile of Truck Drivers

In our society, a truck driver starts his income earning activity at the age of 16 to 20 years. After settling into this occupation, in every life-stage, he is struggling to survive. Very few drivers continue to work with just one owner for longer period. But because of route habits and financial problems, many of them clash with the truck owners and the drivers change their employer. An expectation of higher salary also makes many of them to change
their jobs.

In the unorganized sector transport business, the truck owner does not have any strategic plan or future development plan. As such, his truck driver also concentrates on the trips and income. But in the organized sector, the fleet operators have strategic plans, mission and vision and hence, they use their truck drivers for identifying business opportunities.

As shown in the present study, because the truck business in the unorganized sector is unscheduled, the whole life of the truck driver has also become unscheduled. That is why he is changing his jobs up to fifth time for many of the reasons.

Local truck drivers prefer home-cooked food, but long route drivers give more importance to the food in the roadside Dhabas. The reason is that in the driving routine, because of the continuous driving, they need some change in their diet. The Dhaba habit develops automatically because of certain practices adopted by the Dhaba owners to attract the customers. On the Dhaba, the truck driver also gets peacefulness while having his food.

The truck drivers’ home-coming time is uncertain. When he is absent from home for longer periods, he is related with the workforce.

Transportation business is totally run on the operation of truck. Maximum utilization of the vehicle gives better results to the owner. So, many of the truck owners provide a substitute driver in the absence, because of the next link based on the business, i.e. bankers, family expenses, driver payment, spareparts, fuel expenses, etc.

Daily allowance is universal with the truck driver’s salary. The driver getting less salary gets more daily allowance and the driver with more salary gets less daily allowance. Because of the importance of the salary structure in this business, daily allowance is not given much importance.

During illness or any other financial contingency, the truck driver is entirely dependent on the truck owner. The practice of ‘salary advance’ was found more among the unorganized sector truck drivers. As the transportation business is entirely dependent on the truck driver, after meeting his financial need, the truck owner generally does not deduct the salary advance, because the fitness of the truck driver affects the performance and it is directly related to the economics of the business.

Truck drivers’ occupation is a typical occupation and the truck driver generally does not get out of it, because of his lack of education and the technically, he is considered an unskilled worker. Some truck drivers show interest in giving up this occupation to join a private company or farming. Also, as they are used to remain wakeful throughout the night, some drivers say that after getting out of this occupation, they would seek employment as a night watchman in a security agency.

Most of the truck drivers have not made appropriate financial plans for the future. Own house is their only investment during the working period and the salary has to be used mostly for family expenses. Their major expenditure is incurred on the children’s marriages,
purchase of land at the native place, or becoming a truck owner.

In the truck driving occupation, an unorganized sector driver usually compares himself with the organized sector driver. He wishes for the facilities that are unavailable to him. Even after long years of service, his job is unstable and can lose it with a single word of owner. He does not get an opportunity to justify himself. So, mentally, he wishes for the Government to fix the salary and a pay-scale. In the unorganized sector, many truck drivers have not taken out a personal insurance policy. So, commonly, they are wish that the Government should help them for accident benefits.

9.2.5 Accident Profile

Road accidents is a serious issue - 65% of the road accidents on the highways are caused by the truck drivers. Presently, there is no organizational activity to inform the drivers on their life security. Even though a driver may meet with an accident, it is likely that he would not have a personal accident insurance. In the organized sector, there is a provision of training to refresh his mind from the accident. Such training can promote better results. Currently, there is no concept of training for the drivers in the unorganized sector.

Most of the truck drivers are willing to help other drivers in an accident, i.e. cooperation among the co-truckers saves lives in an accident.

9.2.6 Life-style Profile

The truck driver’s rest period depends on the nature of his work. Daily local trip drivers enjoy their family life, whereas long route truckers do not get much time to rest at home.

The family of a truck driver depends on his salary. So, his family is waiting for the return of the family head to come back. When he comes back home, he spends most of the time at home, does all the pending works and keeps his family happy until his next tour.

After the driver returns home, the atmosphere in the family is changed. But the drivers regret their absence during important family jobs and functions.

Among the various habits during driving a vehicle, many drivers like to listen to music. Excepting some differences, the habits of the drivers in both the organized and unorganized sectors are mostly common. Owner-cum-drivers are also habituated to these. But the effect of these habits does not seem to have fallen on their families, because on returning to home or the native place, the truck drivers indulge in them very less. They also participate in all the social functions as a part of the society.

The truck drivers’ habits picked up while driving the truck appears to affect their health.

In this occupation, the truck drivers appear to do some things by following their colleagues. Being away from home for longer periods, some of them approach commercial sex workers (CSWs). The number of those approaching the CSWs out of curiosity appears
more. During the survey, some truck drivers discussed this subject openly.

9.3 **Observations on Case Studies**

Before entering into truck driver’s occupation, everyone has to work as a truck cleaner for 5 to 6 years. One can obtain a driving licence and buy a truck from the market to start the business, but in the absence of fuller knowledge of management of road transport, the business can come into difficulties. The case studies show that after gaining some confidence in driving, some drivers sold off their lands or sought help from the financiers to start the transport business. But because of the events like accidents, burning down of vehicle, family clashes, etc., their business went into loss, they had to sell off their vehicle and again start working as truck driver or autorickshaw driver.

The transport business is largely dependent on financial management and decision-making, which can be learned through experience. But considering the growing competition, one can survive in the business only through proficiency; else, one has to close down his business and again seek paid employment. Finance plays a major role in the success of any business. The public sector banks provide capital finance to buy a new truck, but not a second-hand truck. So, the truck drivers have to depend on private moneylenders who charge higher rates of interest.

In the case studies, it is observed that the truck drivers are not successful in the business because their finance-related issues are unsystematic. Due to low education level of truck drivers, they cannot do the accounting of expenditure and income in the business. It is also observed that these short-term owners have not planned for long-term policy, but have focused only on the short-term management of finance.

Most of the truck drivers are from agrarian families and even today, their parents and other family members are engaged in agriculture. In some case studies, it was observed that the truck driver’s wife also helps him in the business, e.g. truck loading and unloading of sand, clay, etc.

Although some truck drivers had left their native place for work purposes, after marriage, have returned to it but have remained in truck driving occupation only.

Although there are many owner-cum-drivers, such basic facilities like toilet and electricity are not found in their homes. Instead, they use kerosene lamp for lighting and fetch water from a public well. Their houses are not self-sufficient even in these basic facilities.

Many truck drivers are unwilling to help the road accident victims, the main reason being post-accident police investigation and the subsequent rounds to be made to the courts of law. An accident can occur at any place, kilometres away from the normal workplace of the helpful truck driver; but when the case appears before the court, he has to attend the hearings at his own cost. It is because of this botheration that the truck drivers are unwilling to help the accident victims despite their wishes.
On the other hand, some truck drivers have had a good experience. They still have good relations with the accident victims who they had helped.

After returning home from a long trip, many truck drivers in their free time also concentrate on their children’s school studies. As such, some truck drivers’ children take good education, some others pay attention to the marriages of their daughters, yet others take care of their largish family. It was also observed that some truck drivers had taken on their own children as an understudy. After returning home, some religiously-inclined truck drivers were found to participate in Bhajan and Kirtan programmes.

In the transport business, during idling or waiting period, the groups of truck drivers indulge in alcohol consumption or card-playing for sweepstakes. They also exchange information about bad spots enroute. Some truck owners attempt to attract drivers through various gimmicks, including alcohol, which eventually leads a gullible driver into alcoholism.

Even after meeting with an accident, many truck drivers remain in the same occupation. Their long absences from home and the apprehensions about an accident, their family members do not like their occupation. But it is found that most of them remain in this occupation sheeirly because of the force of daily habit and and the absence of an alternative income source. Even if a driver’s hand or foot is severely injured in an accident, he takes rest for a few days and restarts his work. Also it is found that inspite of meeting with an accident or even with the looming danger of it, there is an absence of insurance awareness among them.

Some truck drivers also participate in social work and become president of a youth circle or Gram Panchayat member. Along with their occupation, they also maintain their social relations in a good manner. Such examples are indicative of the changes occurring in the truck drivers’ occupation.

Finally, after going through all these case studies, it is observed that even though the profitability and sustainability are the two measures of success of truck transport business, the family stability is another measure of success of the occupation of the truck drivers.

Should the truck drivers, while becoming an owner-cum-driver or continuing as a driver, plan systematically for development occupational relations, finances, future planning, vehicle maintenance and break downs, provision for accidents, the truck transport business would become more respectable in the society.

Presently, the truck transport business is not very much profitable because of competition, excessive dead kilometres, idling losses and waiting periods. Nearly 40% of the income is spent on fuel consumption. Fuel and tyre prices are rising day-by-day. Finance is not available easily. These are some of the reasons of the failure of many truck businesses. As such, efficient financial management plays an important role in this business.

When enterprising truck drivers try to become owner-cum-drivers, they take fair business risks. Partnerships are usually shunned, but if it is done, it would spread the risks and divide the losses.
If an owner-cum-driver cannot absorb the losses incurred due to an accident, he has no alternative but to sell the wreck and seek paid employment. Due to the instability of this business, it is found that even though a truck driver becomes an owner-cum-driver, his family problems do not change, he is unable to improve the social status of his family and also is disinterested in developing his family.

Not a single instance was found where an owner-cum-driver overcame his business losses, restarted his business with renewed fervour and became stable in his business. They are unknown to the ideas needed for business development. That is why they concentrate business and resources only at a few places and become unable to come out of the present system and continue to incur further losses.
9.4 **Major Suggestions**

**Occupational and Welfare Needs of Truck Drivers**

A deeper evaluation of the representative profiles presented above leads us to assess the collective occupational and welfare needs of these truck drivers, as well as present solutions thereto, as under:

9.4.1 **Occupational Needs**

(1) **Refresher Driving Training**

It has emerged that majority of these goods transport drivers are self-taught, while apprenticing as a cleaner/attendant on some other truck. Evidently, coupled with their low educational levels, they lack comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of driving, interpreting traffic signs and traffic control devices and understanding the vehicle’s instrumentation. With more and more technology-driven, special purpose goods transport vehicles (container carriers, hazardous chemical carriers, multi-axle heavy-duty carriers) coming on road, it is imperative that these drivers are imparted appropriate training in all these respects, in the interest of the safety of other road users as well as of the truck drivers themselves.

Just like a PUC (Pollution Under Control) certificate made mandatory for every vehicle on road, it must also be made mandatory for the truck driver to undergo a refresher training course of 3 to 5 days, every three to five years, at a recognized/designated driving training school, and to be certified ‘fit’ for driving the particular type of vehicle he is handling.

(2) **Enforcement**

a. **Licensing**

The problems of poor driver behaviour and knowledge are due to the inadequacies in driver training and testing. Professional driving instruction tends to be limited because driving instructors themselves are not properly tested or monitored, there are no driving or instruction manuals and because driving test standards and requirements are inadequate.

The fact that poor driving quality has been the cause for majority of accidents cannot be ignored. Even the minimum requirements of knowledge of driving rules are bypassed at the licensing offices and the driving licenses are obtained by the liaison agencies operating at various offices of the Regional Transport Authority. The unchecked evading of the licensing procedure must be stopped at any cost, without which road safety standards cannot be improved. It is most important that licensing procedures are strictly enforced and the driving training schools are more closely monitored.

b. **Certified Driving Training Schools**

According to the existing rules, the driving training schools for heavy licenses should have a bonafide certificates. But many schools are operating from one room. Even their instructors are not qualified. Besides this, whatever vehicles are mentioned for the driving test
remain on paper only. In fact, the drivers appearing for the driving test are already working as truck drivers and look up to the driving school only as a certificate issuing agency.

Hence, there should be a ‘licensing system’ for such driving schools and only after conducting proper enquiry and checking on their infrastructure and bonafides, the schools should be granted licences. For this purpose, police verification should be made compulsory and those schools that are lacking in standards must be closed down immediately. The standards for the driving training schools should be incorporated in the Motor Vehicles Act itself.

c. Traffic Violations

The traffic policemen are generally less well-trained, ill-equipped and mostly stationed at traffic intersections. But most of the traffic violations occur on unmonitored road stretches. The police operating under such conditions find it difficult to influence violations. Improved training and proper deployment of policemen serves as a check on those inclined towards violating traffic rules. The introduction of police patrols on the intercity highways has certainly improved the situation. Improvements in traffic policing thus has a considerable potential for both improving driver behaviour and reducing accidents, provided that the police’s capability to enforce traffic violations is enhanced. Such improvements, of course, will need to be accompanied by modifications in both the traffic legislation, the ways of dealing with the offenders and appropriate publicity campaign for the traffic rules.

d. Interlinking of Licensing System:

As the employment continuity of a truck driver depends on his clean motor licence, a driver involved in an accident should be traced out and the entry of the accident made on his licence. Action taken on the licence should be notified to every licensing authority in India.

e. Mandatory Insurance Cover

Production of valid and current personal insurance policy must be mandatory at the time of the renewal of driving licence.

f. Post-accident Contingencies

Earlier, private hospitals and medical practitioners were hesitant to treat accident victims, firstly because they had to waste many days in Law Courts as witness and secondly, because their medical records were not acceptable to the judiciary. Section 134(a) of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, has been recently amended to make it binding on every registered medical practitioner to provide aid to an accident victim without waiting for any procedural formalities; in fact, refusal to do so is a punishable offence. The amendment also makes it obligatory for the driver of an accident vehicle to take the injured to the nearest hospital or clinic.

Unfortunately, majority of the drivers are still unaware of this amendment and hesitate to help the accident victims. In fact, if the vehicle is movable, there is a marked tendency to speed off; if it is not, then the offending driver simply disappears from the scene for the fear of
being manhandled by the crowds. It is thus imperative that there is a greater need of both the drivers’ and the public’s education in this behalf.

g. Provision of Highway Ambulance

Efficient and well-equipped highway ambulances should be provided at strategic points, especially near the suspected accident-prone road stretches, to ensure quicker medical attention.

(3) Safety on Road

a. Road Accidents Investigations

The records of the road accidents are mostly maintained by the Police Department. Some accidents are also investigated by the surveyors of the insurance companies. These records seldom give any clue about such specific causes as drunken driving, rash driving, overloading, skidding, unkempt roads, difficult driving conditions (snowfall, rains, lightening and thunderstorms, flooding, landslides, accident-prone stretches, etc.), distractions (provocative hoardings and billboards, unexpected blasts of music or other noises, sudden darting of children or animals across the vehicle’s path, on-the-whim brinkmanship (racing) of the driver in the lane alongside), unfamiliar terrain, poor eyesight and health of the driver, etc.

In the absence of concerted and channellized effort to pinpoint the correct causes, at least for major road accidents, through proper investigation and analysis of the on-site information gathered, it is rather difficult to evolve effective accident preventive measures and to avoid wastage of life and property on roads.

Although sometime ago, the Indian Road Congress had recommended an elaborate ‘accident reporting format’ for Police investigation, it is seldom used for the purpose. The use of this form must be strictly enforced and the data reported therein analyzed and evaluated in nation-wide, State-wide and region-wide patterns to derive concrete inferences as to the causes of the accidents and also to devise meaningful measures for the avoidance of the accidents.

b. Life-limit on Commercial Vehicles

There should be maximum life limit for the commercial vehicles. After completion of the life period, the vehicle should be dismantled. But, in practice, when the Government-owned vehicles complete their life period, these are condemned and auctioned off to the public. These condemned and unfit vehicles, after minor repairs and painting, are put back on the road as commercial vehicles. Such vehicles also get fitness certificate every year. This practice should be stopped forthwith.

c. Creation of Transport Nagars

The idea of a ‘Transport Nagar’ is modelled on the American ‘truck stop’ or ‘truck farm’. To begin with, the development and infrastructure planners in the Government should consider these Nagars as an essential component, nay a prerequisite, of the national highway
network, and may sanction their commissioning, at strategic locations along the highways, under anyone of the following arrangements: BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer), BOO (Build, Own and Operate), BOOT (Build, Own, Operate and Transfer) or BOLT (Build, Operate, Lease, Transfer).

These Nagars may contain facilities for fulfilling the drivers’ basic needs - food and refreshment, bath, shaving, clothes’ washing and sleeping. These may also have long-distance telephone facilities for the drivers to keep in touch with their employers and the loved ones, ATMs to withdraw money, letter-box to send paper work to the employers, Internet connectivity to keep in on-line touch with the employers. These Nagars may also have a large driver lounge where they may converse, play video games/other indoor games or watch television, while waiting for a load or getting the vehicle serviced/repaiired or before going to sleep.

These Nagars may also have vehicle refuelling, servicing and repair facilities, together with the retail outlets of spareparts, provisions and food items, the space for which may be leased out to the respective service providers.

While offering a safe sanctuary to the drivers enroute, the creation of such Nagars would also help to rein in the menace of the highway-based commercial sex and drug abuse. These would also generate substantial employment opportunities for the local entrepreneurs and the youth in the rural areas.

Many a truck driver would willingly pay reasonable fees for the use of such services, rather than spending the night in the open and risking their lives, vehicles and the precious cargo inside.

Someday, in a not very distant future, every major highway in India is going to change into the ‘neon ribbon’ (nickname for an American superhighway beginning in New Orleans in the south, running parallel to Appalachian Mountains and through various eastern seaboard States, and finally reaching into New York in the east; during night, from the air, because of the innumerable establishments on either sides, catering to the vehicular traffic, the highway looks like a thousand miles long continuous ribbon of neon light; hence, the name). It is time that our infrastructure and development planners woke up to this eventuality and tapped its potential.

d. Truck Fare Information System

Alike computerized agro-produce market information system (being installed in many agricultural produce market committees across the country), the Union Ministry of Transport should take initiative in developing and installing a truck fare information system, whereby the truck fares prevailing at least on the national and state highways would become known to truck operators on day-to-day basis. This would enable them to select the desired and profitable routes and reduce the idle of the vehicle, and ultimately, improve the economic condition of the owners.
e. Internet Video-Conferencing at Transport Offices

This facility would enable the truck drivers to have a face-to-face contact with their families at pre-decided timings, irrespective of the distance between each other, to discuss the pressing family matters and personal well-being. This facility would reduce the mental agony of both the parties. The families may use such facilities installed at a nearby transport office.

9.4.2 Welfare Needs

(1) Income Security

As is well-known, the micro-economics of any income-generating activity in the unorganized sector is beyond the total control of any Government-appointed regulatory authority. As for the unorganized goods transport industry, this is amply evident from the truck driver’s income disparities revealed under this investigation. The compulsions of the situations and the drives to generate more income are quite different in the unorganized sector than in the ownership and organized good transport sectors. On the other hand, it is quite an irony that a driver handling a vehicle worth multi-lakhs rupees is paid a paltry monthly remuneration of between Rs. 1,000 to 5,000/-. It is thus imperative that the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, 1962, need to be strictly enforced in the unorganized goods transport industry, so as to ensure income security for the truck crew (driver, second driver and cleaner/attendant).

(2) Job Continuity

It has emerged that in the unorganized goods transport industry, the drivers routinely change their employer and the employers routinely hire another driver. But the driver leaving one employer for another does not have a proof of his credentials like experience, duration/s of former employment/s, salary/wages drawn, non-involvement in accidents, etc., to show to his prospective employer. Many a driver, therefore, bluffs his way through; while many a prospective employer disbelieves his claims and tries to bargain with him over the salary/wages and work routine.

It would, therefore, be an innovative idea to issue the truck drivers with a service book that would contain his comprehensive employment records. Each entry therein should be authenticated by the employer on the yearly basis and also at the time of separation from the current employment. The district-level RTA officer may be designated as the appellate authority to redress the driver’s grievances in this behalf.

(3) Job-related Facilities

a. Fixation of Basic Pay-scale

It has emerged under this investigation that there is no uniformity in the salary/wages paid to the truck drivers in both the organized and unorganized sectors, although the nature of their work is identical throughout the goods transport sector. Another fact is that the truck
drivers are not at all organized into trade unions to force their demands. Hence, it is for the Labour Department of the State Government to take the initiative and bring the representatives of the organized and unorganized sector employers to the negotiating table and work out a suitable basic pay-scale for the truck drivers.

b. Grant of Paid Casual Leave

Alike organized sector truck drivers, the unorganized sector truck drivers also have personal chores to attend, for which they have to absent themselves from the work. Presently, their wages are deducted for the period of absence, inspite of providing another driver to keep the vehicle running. Here also, it is for the Labour Department of the State Government to take the initiative and bring the representatives of the organized and unorganized sector employers to the negotiating table and work out suitable model working condition standing orders for the goods transport sector workers.

c. Social Security

Many trade unions of the unorganized sector workers have been agitating for a comprehensive legislation for unorganized workers, including employment protection and social security. There has been a demand of social assistance-based social security system for these workers, considering their low income levels and the inability to contribute in the long run. There have also been demands for employment regulation, livelihood protection and a price support system, so that the unorganized sector workers can get real protection.

The Government, however, circulated an unorganized sector bill, proposing only enabling provisions and ultimately introduced a scheme for social security of unorganized workers in early-2004. Subsequently, the Labour Ministry floated one more draft bill (2004) and now the latest bill (2006) proposed by the National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganized Sector is being debated. The intention of the Government is questionable, because it has been delaying the legislation and denying social security umbrella to the unorganized sector workers for long time now. The Union Government is unwilling to part with Rs.25,000 crore a year and each State Government upto Rs.500 crore every year for the unorganized sector workers, especially in the absence of any strong movement or struggle for such a social security coverage. It is also under pressure from the World Bank and other international groups to withdraw from public social security provisions.

Now it is for the people’s elected representative in the Parliament and the State Legislatures to mount a counter-pressure on the Governments to enact social security legislations as early as possible.

(4) Free Annual Medical/Health Checkup Camps

Realizing the importance of the healthfulness of the truck drivers and the revenue they bring into the State exchequer, the district level Regional Transport Authority, working in association with social welfare-oriented NGOs, may organize free annual medical/health checkup camps, where the truck drivers may be advised about their developing health problems.
and suggested suitable remedial measures. The support of the automotive manufacturers may also be mobilized in this behalf.

At such camps, they may also be counselled against tobacco addiction, alcoholism, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS; all of which are the attendant corollaries of the life on the highway and many truck drivers unwittingly become victims of it.