



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## **Workers Joint Protest at Gurgaon Against Maruti Suzuki Verdict** *(Report Page 18)*



**CITU Secretary A. R. Sindhu Addressing**



**Trade Unions Joint Rally at Jaipur**

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## CITU 14<sup>th</sup> Tripura State Conference



**Chief Minister Manik Sarkar addressing the rally; CITU leaders on the dais**

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## WORKING CLASS

APRIL 2017

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## *Editorial*

### **Urgently Reorient Organisation for Changing Policies**

Four aspects are clear from the recently held 5 states Assembly election results.

One, that it was a vote against all ruling parties / coalitions in the respective states. All ruling parties in their respective states were defeated. Why; because the election results are the clear reflection of people's anger against the ruling parties' misrule and their anti-people policies. It is the same anti-workers and anti-people neoliberal economic policies which were being pursued by these parties which Modi-led BJP government is aggressively pursuing at the centre. This vote is not the reflection of people's support to Modi's / BJP's aggressive neoliberal policy, nor its demonetisation steps as the corporate media wanted the people to believe. People did not find any recognizable alternative policy platform. Therefore, for alternative they are moving in circle.

Secondly, it was the communal polarization and caste coalition, to which the prime minister himself gave big push, which resulted in big victory for BJP In Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the states where caste-based politics remained the bane in democratic set-up.

Thirdly, the pro-people alternative policy options before the people remained virtually blank because of weak Left forces, the working class and other class and mass organisations, their reach and campaign. As there was no recognizable alternative policy option before the people; as there was no electoral battle

on policy platform, it is ridiculous to say that it was victory of Modi's policy.

Fourthly, it exposed the weakness in the trade union movement. Successful strikes and struggles against anti-workers and anti-people policies, as was reflected in the huge working class and people's unity and mobilisation in two successful successive 2 September strikes in 2015 and in 2016 and in several sectoral strikes, in big mobilisations during meetings and demonstrations mostly on policy issues, got disrupted and went in disarray at the time of election. The masses, which struck work and mobilized masses against the forces which follow anti-workers and anti-people policies, stood by the same forces at the time of elections giving sanction to pursue the same anti-workers and anti-people policies.

CITU functionaries at all levels, particularly, in vast Hindi-speaking states, must ponder over these aspects and reorient their organisational functioning to reach to the masses for change, changing the policies.

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# Important ESIC Decisions

*ESIC meeting of 18 February, 2017 took the following important decisions*

1. At present, an insured person (IP) can opt for 2 dispensaries in the same state. This created problem, mainly for migratory workers, in availing facilities for treatment of their family members in their native states. The meeting decided that the IPs can, henceforth, opt for 2 dispensaries in any part of the country with compliance of some formalities.
2. The meeting decided that In case of road accidents, employment injuries and other life threatening emergencies, IPs may seek direct admission at tie-up hospitals. Tie-up hospital will immediately start the stabilising treatment and will seek permission through e-mail from the nearest ESIC hospital / office or continuing treatment.
3. For retired IPs for OPD treatment at the cost of Rs.10 / per month with coverage ceiling of Rs.1,600, as was decided in 1991; has now been proposed to be revised upward for coverage ceiling of Rs.21,000 with contribution of Rs.50 / per month (Rs. 600 / per annum).
4. ESIC considered introduction of scheme of primary, secondary and super specialty treatment for retired IPs and spouses on SST / all referrals to tie-up hospitals with expenditure ceiling of Rs.10 lakh and life time ceiling of Rs.15 lakh against proposed contribution of Rs. 500 / month (Rs.6000 / annum).
5. Tie-up with the local reputed hospitals is being explored to provide secondary and super specialty treatment for newly covered areas.

*- Prasanta N Chowdhury*

## Closing Ceremony of 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of CITU

200 leading functionaries, coming from different parts of the state, joined the closing ceremony of the Reception Committee of the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of CITU at IDCOL Auditorium in Bhubaneswar on 8 February. The meeting was presided over by CITU state president Lambodar Nayak and attended and addressed by its national president K Hemalata and general secretary Tapan Sen.

The Reception Committee with the former advocate general of Odisha Jaganath Pattnaik as its chairman hosted CITU's 15<sup>th</sup> conference successfully at Puri on 26-30 November. Yearlong preparatory work throughout the state included each CITU worker contributing Rs.200 and one handful of rice per family. The Reception Committee in its preparatory work received active supports from AIKS, AIDWA, DYFI, SFI, Adivasi Mahasangha and AILU in the state. Fraternal organisations also substantially contributed in hosting the conference. From outside the state, the Reception Committee received substantial contribution and help from different CITU state committee, federations and unions.

Addressing the meeting Hemlata said that as neo-liberal offensive of RSS-led BJP government, with Narendra Modi as its prime minister, there is all round offence on the life and liberty of common people against which the working class of India will have to conduct serious battles. The working raised its voice against attacks in past and will continue to do so in future also. She warmly greeted the Reception Committee members, workers and other toiling sections of Odisha for their efforts, help and support in successfully hosting the conference at Puri.

Tapan Sen in his speech emphasised on unity and struggle for workers' and people's rights. Anti-people and anti-national economic policy is being pursued with massive propaganda on various programmes and schemes with catchy slogans to misled people. The communal outfits are busy day and night to divide common people. At this juncture there is a need to strengthen the CITU organisation in Odisha for a strong working class movement. He greeted the CITU state committee and its different level functionaries for their conscious class initiative.

The Reception Committee handed over a cheque for Rs.10 lakh to the CITU general secretary Tapan Sen as contribution to CITU all India centre from the savings in the conference fund.

The meeting was also addressed by CITU state general secretary Bishnu Mohanty and Ali Kishore Pattnaik. *(Inputs: Satyananda Behera)*

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# Lessons from 5 State Elections; Urgent Tasks

K. Hemalata, President CITU

The results of the recent elections to 5 state Assemblies indicate the continuing rise of the right wing forces in the country. The BJP swept the elections in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and managed to form governments in Goa and Manipur though it was not elected as the largest party. It lost to the Congress in Punjab. Though elections were held in five states, the results in Uttar Pradesh, the biggest and most populated state in the country attain significance.

The parties in power in all 5 states suffered serious setbacks, showing people's discontent against them. In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi party was routed despite aligning with the Congress. In Uttarakhand, the Congress faced a similar debacle. In Punjab the ruling Akali BJP government was resoundingly defeated and the Congress regained power. In Goa the ruling BJP was behind the Congress which emerged as the largest party but BJP was able to form the government with the help of some smaller parties. In Manipur the ruling Congress could not get majority though it managed to be the single largest party; but the BJP formed the government with the support of some regional parties. But what was common, was the gains made by the BJP on the whole. The discontent of the people was caused by their deteriorating conditions due to the neoliberal policies that all these parties implemented while in power either at the centre or in the state. These policies are intrinsically against the interest of all sections of the toiling people. But in the absence of a credible alternative, people's anger was directed at the party ruling in the state.

The BJP resorted to a highly charged communal campaign during the elections led by none other than the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and other leaders of BJP including its president exhibited total disregard to facts to create the false impression that the SP government was pampering the Muslims. References to *khobaristan* and *shamshan* and about supply of electricity during *Ramzan* and *Diwali* were deliberately made to rouse the feeling among the Hindus that they were being discriminated against.

This was accompanied by directing the nationalist sentiments of the people against the Muslims as well as the opposing parties. Muslims in general were equated to terrorists. The BJP president Amit Shah stooped to such an extent to use the term 'kasab' to link the other major parties in the state with cross border terrorism. In addition, the BJP also resorted to caste based mobilisation to isolate the caste based following of the SP and BSP.

Demonetisation played havoc with the lives of millions of workers, particularly in the unorganised sector, the small business and other establishments, the small farmers and agricultural workers etc. Thousands of small and medium establishments were closed down. Lakhs of workers lost their jobs and earnings. It has caused irreversible damage to many small enterprises. But by projecting himself as the 'son of a poor man working hard for the poor' as opposed to the 'Harvard educated' intellectuals who criticised his demonetisation drive, Modi was able to create the illusion and mislead people that demonetisation was against the black money holders and the corrupt. He was able to convince the people, particularly the poor that it was meant to establish an equitable society, which was being opposed by the elite and the rich.

This victory of BJP portends increasing aggressiveness on the part of the BJP-led government at the centre in the pursuit of its anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national neoliberal agenda. The corporate media and international financial institutions have openly expressed their expectations of speeding up the so called 'reforms' process including labour law amendments and privatisation of the public sector. It will further embolden the RSS and its outfits to step up their sinister and divisive activities. Yogi Adityanath, known for his provocative and hate speeches has been nominated by the RSS to be the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. This is surely rewarding his role in creating communal polarisation in the state. This clearly is meant to give the message about the game plan of the RSS and BJP for the coming general elections in 2019. Within a few days of the results being announced, several incidents of attacks by the so called 'gau rakshaks' on hotels and shops owned by Muslims, alleging that they were selling beef are being reported in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh etc.

The 'acche din' promised by the BJP and Modi in the 2014 election campaign have proved to be a mirage. The 'sab ke sath; sab ka vikas' slogan has proved to be empty. Since coming to power, the Modi led BJP government has been consistently taking measures to satisfy the interests of the big corporates, domestic

and foreign. The basic and hard won rights of the workers are being attacked on the pretext of improving 'the ease of doing business'. The government has decided to privatise the public sector, the wealth of our nation, through strategic sale. Privatisation of public sector, drastic reduction in permanent jobs in the public sector through rampant contractorisation, casualisation etc will deprive the Dalits of their Constitutional right to reservation in jobs. Even before the elections the government has been displaying tendencies of authoritarianism and intolerance. The parties and forces that opposed its policies are being branded 'anti national'. While the RSS affiliated BMS is being promoted and being given representation in joint bodies, even where it has no or nominal presence, major trade unions are being denied representation in bipartite and tripartite bodies at national and international levels on flimsy grounds. Such authoritarian tendencies and attempts to suppress all opposition voices are bound to grow in the coming days.

It is sad that the party leading the government which is acting against the national interests has been able to make huge political gains by invoking the nationalist and patriotic feelings of our people. One of the major factors contributing to this paradox is the failure of the forces opposing BJP to explain to the people about the real character of the policies being pursued by the BJP led government at the centre and in different states.

The Congress and the other regional parties have been following the same neoliberal policies when in power and cannot be expected to do this. The trade union movement, which has led two countrywide general strikes since the BJP led government came to power at the centre, with increasing participation of workers, was also not able to create awareness among the working class about how the neoliberal policies pursued by the Modi government at the centre were benefiting the big national and multinational corporations and the big business houses at the cost of the poor. Though the class based trade unions like CITU are not organisationally strong in these states, the importance of linking up the day to day problems faced by the workers and linking them up with the policies being pursued by the government was not grasped. This shortcoming is not restricted to these states only. It must be overcome at the earliest to effectively challenge and reverse the rightward shift in the country. It has to be realised that the real counter force to caste, communal and other divisive forces is the unity of the toiling people belonging to all castes, religions and regions, which has to be built up on the basis of militant struggles against the owning classes. 'The root of communalism is the alliance of the bourgeois and feudal classes. Behind the majority and minority communalists and fundamentalists stand the bourgeois landlord - ruling classes. They can be successfully resisted only by rallying the toiling people belonging to all castes, communities etc against the ruling and opposition bourgeois classes and their parties'. That is why we have to combine the struggle against communalism with the struggle against the anti people and anti national economic policies of the government.

That is precisely why the fifteenth conference of CITU reiterated the call to 'expose the policies of the ruling classes and the parties that support these policies while conducting campaigns and agitations on the day to day demands of the workers'. All joint and independent campaigns and struggles of CITU, from local to national issues, have to be carried out keeping this in mind. The month long campaign from 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> May as per the decision of the 15<sup>th</sup> conference of CITU has to be planned with this perspective.

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## **1.4 Million IT Sector Employees Facing Jobloss**

### **Any Connect with US President Trump's 'No Outsourcing Policy'?**

Nearly 1.4 million of employees with 8-10 years of experience in the Indian IT sector are facing an uncertain future as the industry is adopting automation and newer technologies, reports *Economic Times* on 7 March. "As automation and digital technologies upend the normal way of doing business, the traditional structure is under strain. Roles that were typically assigned to employees with over 10 years of experience are now going to machines. For example, Capgemini is using IBM's cognitive consulting tool Watson to assign people to projects, while Infosys is building a machine-learning platform that will help project managers take decisions to make better trade-offs between the number of people needed for a project and the timeline for completion." (From ET; 7 March, 2017)

Or is it a cover to get rid of large number of employees by the IT industry in India facing US President Trump's 'no outsourcing policy' and also to save money by removing 8-10 years of experienced employees drawing higher salaries?

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# INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

## Banking

### **Countrywide Complete Strike Of Banks Workers, Officers**

At the call of United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), the joint platform of 9 unions; bank workers and officers, inclusive of regional rural banks and co-operative banks, resorted to complete countrywide strike on 28 February, 2017. Employees of RBI and NABARD held solidarity demonstrations at all centres.

The striking bank workers-officers demanded criminal actions against the corporates who are the wilful defaulters of bank loans and fixing accountability of top banks executives for bad loans; for legitimate compensation to bank employees and officers for extra hours of work due to demonetization; against neoliberal banking reforms and outsourcing of permanent jobs; against labour laws reforms and infringement on trade union rights; and for some other employees related demands.

Demonetisation caused death of 151 innocent citizens including 10 bank employees. The bank employees, including women, had to work beyond normal working hours, till midnight on some days, during November-December, 2016. They have not been paid due compensation as yet as per the terms of their service conditions.

Strike was a warning signal of future struggle of banks workers-officers against the anti-people, anti-labour and pro-corporate policies of the Central Government. (*Inputs: BEFI statement*)

The banking service in rural India was also completely paralysed as employees resorted to strike under United Forum of Regional Rural Bank Unions (UFRRBU). At the joint call of UFBU and UFRRBU, 85,000 workmen and officers in 21,300 Regional Rural Bank branches in 644 districts of the country joined all India bank strike on 28 February. (*Inputs: D.N.Trivedi*)

### **CITU Congratulated the Bank Employees for Successful Strike**

In a statement on 28 February, CITU congratulated the bank employees for the successful countrywide strike at the call of the united forum of bank employees, the UFBU. Fully supporting their demands, CITU said that in the name of banking reforms the government wants to ruin the public sector banks which were instrumental in saving country's economy during the global financial meltdown of 2008.

The government has not paid due compensation to the bank employees, as per their service conditions, for their patient and hard work during demonetisation period. During that period bank employees, including women, worked patiently even till midnight trying their best to satisfy the customers.

CITU assured the bank employees that it would always stand in solidarity with their future struggle against the neoliberal policies of the government.

### **SBI's Loot of People's Money; Issue Raised in Rajya Sabha**

Raising the issue at *Zero Hour* in Rajya Sabha on 20 March, K. K. Ragesh, CPI(M) M.P. from Kerala, demanded of the Central Government to direct State Bank of India's (SBI) to withdraw its decisions,

(i) raising ceiling from Rs.500 to Rs.5,000 of monthly average balance in saving accounts and

(ii) to impose penalty in case of any violation. This will definitely be followed by all other banks. The decisions will affect 31 crore depositors of SBI, the largest bank in India, and depositors of other banks and will affect the whole economic system.



It is not going to affect the rich, but the poor. While public sector banks are in deep crisis due to huge NPAs, government is waiving off corporates' NPAs. Government is asking the poor to open bank accounts and for digital transactions. The government is deciding to resolve the problem at the expense of the poor people, the poor depositors of the country. It is loot and plunder of poor people's money.

CITU general secretary Tapan Sen associated with the matter raised by K. K. Ragesh and demanded full discussion on this issue for which notice will be given, he told.

## **Transferring Burden on Employees**

**Pradip Biswas, General Secretary, BEFI**

Finance Ministry of the Government of India in a recent communication to 10 public sector banks have asked to curtail benefits available to employees and officers in terms of industry level settlements signed between the unions and the apex body of bankers, the India Banks Association (IBA).

To strengthen the capital base of public sector banks periodical infusion of capital is needed from the Government as a matter of routine and provisions are made in the central budget for this purpose depending upon the need of the situation.

Public sector banks have landed in difficult situation because of accumulation of huge bad loan, called as Non-Performing Assets (NPA), mainly from the corporate defaulters who are not repaying the bank loans wilfully. Instead of taking stringent measures to recover these loans from such defaulter, government's future roadmap for public sector banks, as documented in '*Indradhanush*', recommended for further lending to such borrowers in the name of restructuring.

Joint platform of United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) called these corporate defaulters, like Vijay Mallya and others, who are not repaying the bank loans deliberately as '*wilful defaulter*'. The *Indradhanush* document, released by the Ministry of Finance on 14 August, 2015 calls them as '*non cooperative borrowers*'.

The attitude of the Government towards these borrowers is well manifested in this document. UFBU demanded to treat these borrowers as *criminal offenders* while the attitude of the Government towards them is soft by terming them as *Non-cooperative borrower*!

Gross NPA of all public sector banks stood at Rs 5,39,956 Cr as at 31 March 2016 as against Rs. 2,78,877 Cr of 31 March, 2015 recording a growth of 92.63% over last one year. Public sector banks earned an operating profit of Rs.1,36,926 Cr as at 31 March 2016. But, as on the same date the banks incurred a net loss of Rs.17,992 Cr due to provisioning of Rs1,54,199 Cr mainly against NPA.

The PSBs that have received the aforesaid communication from the government are United Bank of India, UCO Bank, Allahabad Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Vijaya Bank, Bank of India, Central Bank of India, Andhra Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Dena Bank.

The government is hell bent to privatise the PSBs and is now contemplating to transfer the burden of loss on the shoulders of the workforce who rendered yeomen service to the countrymen while opening Jandhan accounts and particularly for exchanging demonetised bank notes and they are now being attempted to be penalised by the anti-people Government at the Centre.

Bank employees movement have the experience of fighting back this type of offensives in the past when in late nineties three banks viz India Bank, UCO Bank and United Bank of India were termed as terminally ill and attempts were made for large scale closure of their branches, lowering of manpower, withdrawing of existing rights and benefits. Employees and officers of the banks could withstand all the challenges by united struggle. By their collective efforts only all these banks could turn around.

This time also the united movement of the bank employees and officers will be able to combat the offensives. BEFI called upon all its members to immediately unleash extensive campaign against the pernicious policy of the government and to be in readiness to join any call that may come even in short notice.



# Cashless or Bankless

A. K. Ramesh

The report submitted in December 2016 by the Committee on Digital Payments, headed by the former finance secretary Ratan Watal, draws lessons from the recent studies conducted by *Earnest & Young*, *MasterCard* and *Visa*. The appointment of the eleven-member committee was notified in August 2016 only. But within such a short period, the committee could bring out its recommendations, as it had just to cut and paste from the earlier said reports, tasks being made easier by the predecessors.

*Visa* had undertaken a study '*Growth of digital payments in India – a five year outlook*'. The same was published in October 2016, just ahead of the November 8 demonetisation. It assessed that India's net cost of cash is 1.7 percent of GDP in 2014-15 and suggests that the cost could and should be drastically reduced. The study says that if the cost is reduced to 1.3 percent by the year 2025, an amount of Rs 4 lakh crore could be saved. *Visa* is so confident that as and when currency printing is reduced, those companies involved in digital transactions would reap the benefits.

Watal Committee report, if implemented (all likelihoods are there for that), would change the very concept of banking business. It defines banking as the business of giving assured returns to deposits and lending, and payment as a business of transferring money. The committee agrees that traditionally, banks perform both banking and payments. But that has to be changed. Payments should be taken out from the regulations of RBI and a new regulatory mechanism by the name, '*Payment Regulatory Board*', has to be evolved. The structure of that body also is explained in unequivocal terms that though the Governor of the RBI could act as the chairman of that regulatory board, the representation of the central bank should never become a majority. This artificial bifurcation of payments and banking was objected by a member of the committee, H.R. Khan, who was the deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India. His dissent note forms part of the report.

Payment services hitherto done by banks are recommended to be opened up for non-banking firms also, so that the *fintech* companies can serve their customers at the cost of commercial banks. The committee had no hesitation to suggest that RTGS and NEFT facilities should be opened up for Jio and the like.

Another very important shift from the existing practice recommended by the Watal Committee is that the ownership of the National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) should be *diversified*. As of now, NPCI is owned by 10 banks ie, SBI, PNB, Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, Bank of India, ICICI, HDFC Bank, City Bank, HSBC each having stake of 7.47 percent, making it 74.7 percent of the capital, Dena Bank, Central Bank of India, Allahabad Bank and other 16 banks each with 1.6 percent, making a total of 20.14 percent and another 10 banks each with 0.42 percent, making another 4.2 percent and some co-op banks and few Gramin banks put together 17 in number, with 0.5 percent stake have 0.85 percent. What is intended of diversification is that the new *fintech* companies also should be given a slice of the bread.

A bill that was enacted in the year 2007 by the name Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2007 is suggested to be updated by a new bill by name Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2017. This is so as to remove the so-called anomaly inherent in it, clarified by the committee as "*access to payment system by new non bank PSPs like fintech firms have been unduly restricted. Most of them can access payment systems only through the banks, which are also their competitors*" in the industry. In the name of providing level playing field, the committee wants to provide undue support to the new *fintech* companies at the cost of banking system.

No doubt, the tall claims on the cashless society and digital India is just to allow the big capitalists loot and plunder of the common man. The tall claims of prevention of black money, fake notes, corruption and terrorism have proved to be nonsensical slogans raised so as to emotionally hijack the patriotic elements. The real aim behind the demonetisation is getting exposed. The declaration of the finance minister that all the currency withdrawn would not be replaced is an assurance made openly to the new *fintech* companies that their interests would be safe guarded.

The recommendations of the Ratan Watal committee is an eye opener to those sections of people who are still under the illusion about the public pronouncement on November 8, that it was to curb black money, prevent fake notes, end corruption and to stop terrorism that the new exercise is being carried out.

It is high time that the pernicious effects of the Ratan Watal Committee report be propagated among the masses.

## **7<sup>TH</sup> Wage Settlement Signed In NABARD**

Long awaited 7<sup>th</sup> bipartite wage settlement was signed between All India Nabard Employees Association (AINBEA) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) management on 1 March, 2017 with parity with our referral institution on the basis of the draft of wage settlement, signed on 5 July 2016 with.

To pursue the wage settlement, NABARD employees resorted to agitation under AINBEA since November including demonstration and gate meetings, mass deputation, badge wearing, dharna, March to Parliament on 7 February 2017 and strike call by March end.

On this occasion, AINBEA acknowledged the help extended by CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP for his active intervention including several times writing to and meeting the union finance minister Arun Jaitley; All India Kisan Sabha; United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) and others.

AINBEA, however, cautioned about the impending challenges like dwindling fund support to NABARD, dilution of autonomy for RBI, weakening of cooperatives, taxation of NABARD and cooperatives, snapping of links between RBI and NABARD etc necessitating united move with the mainstream bank employees and general trade union movement. (*Inputs: All India Nabard Employees Association*)

## **Central Government**

### **Against Betrayal by Modi Government, Strike by 13 Lakh Central Govt. Employees**

Responding to the call of the Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers (CCGEW) and defying Government's order, to prevent strike, threatening break in service, suspension and dismissals in addition to no-work no-pay; about 13 lakh central government employees went on nationwide strike on 16 March in protest against the betrayal of the Group of Ministers (GoM) of the NDA government at the Centre by not keeping the assurance given to the National Joint Council of Action (NJCA) of the central government employees on 30 June, 2016.

Union home minister Rajnath Singh, finance minister Arun Jaitley and railway minister Suresh Prabhu had assured the NJCA on 30 June that a High Level Committee would be appointed by the Government within 4 months to negotiate and settle the issues arising out of implementation of 7<sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission (CPC) report including minimum pay, fitness formula, allowances etc. On the basis of that assurance, the central government employees' federations deferred the notified joint indefinite strike which was to commence from 11 July, 2016.

CCGEW called strike was total in postal department as 5 lakh postal employees joined the strike with all RMS offices remaining closed as employees and officers joining the strike. In income tax department strike was total with participation of employees and officers. Employees of Audit and Accounts, Civil Accounts, Ground Water Board, Botanical Survey of India, Atomic Energy, ISRO, Printing & Stationery, Indian Bureau of Mines, GSI, AGMARK, CGHS, Medical Store Depot, Film Institute of India, ICMR, Customs and Central Excise, Central Food Laboratory, Census, Defence Accounts, other autonomous and scientific research institutions joined the nationwide strike.

Statewise strike was 100% in Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and other NE states, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra; 70%-80% in Andhra Pradesh,

Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab; 60%-70% in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Haryana; 40%-50% in Delhi and Rajasthan; and 30% in Himachal Pradesh.

All India State Government Employees Federation, All India Defence Employees Federation, BSNL Employees Union, Central Pensioners organisations and several other organisations staged solidarity demonstrations throughout the country. (Inputs: M. Krishnan)

## **CITU's Solidarity with Central Govt. Employees' Strike**

CITU expressed its solidarity with CCGEW-called nationwide successful strike, joined by 13 lakhs central government employees, against non-implementation of GoM's assurances to NJCA eight months back and against mass scale contractorisation of workers and their non-regularisation in government departments. CITU congratulated the central government employees who went ahead with the strike defying government's threats. CITU assured its complete support in all their future struggles. CITU urged the Government to settle the demands of the central government employees through discussion without further delay.

### In the Parliament

## **Central Government Employees' Strike Issue**

Drawing the attention of Rajya Sabha during Zero Hour on 16 March about central government employees' nationwide strike on that day; CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP said the strike was in protest against huge non-filling up of 40% vacancies in central government offices being replaced by contract employees taking away the Constitutional right of job reservation of SCs and STs and trampling the Supreme Court judgment on 'same pay for same work'; against NPS; and against the betrayal of the Government by not keeping the assurance given to all trade unions of central government employees, including defence and railways, on the upward revision of deficient minimum wage, fixed by the 7<sup>th</sup> CPC, removal fitment anomalies etc. He demanded of the Government to immediately respond to the just demand of the employees.

### State Governments

## **Parliament March & Mass Dharna**

On 2 March, 2017, under the banner of All India State Government Employees Federation (AISGEF) large number of state government employees, representing almost all states in India, converged in the national capital, New Delhi, for the *March to Parliament*. Big contingents came from nearby states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab; and from Haryana, under the banner of Sarb Karamchari Sangh, a 5000 strong contingent joined the All India *March*.

The *March* began at Jantar Mantar and on reaching Parliament Street it converted into a mass dharna in front of the police barricade demanding withdrawal of New National Pension Scheme (NPS) and reinstatement of post-2004 employees in EPS; regularisation of contract and casual workers; implementation of Supreme Court judgement on 'same pay for same work'; filling up of all vacant posts, inclusive of SC, ST, disable quotas, with permanent employees; check on price-rise and strengthening of PDS etc.

Addressing the rally CITU general secretary Tapan Sen said that the forces, which can raise workers and employees issues in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, are getting dwindled continuously. This trend has to be reversed. On one side Modi government is giving huge tax concession to the capitalists, on the other side budget provisions on people's welfare services have less increase or cuts. Instead of expansion there is contraction and marketisation of people's welfare schemes.

In his address, the noted economist of the country Prabhat Patnaik raised 5 basic issues of the people – health, education, employment, housing and pension including old age pension - which can be provided to all citizens of the country by recovering 8% of the GDP from the huge profit earning corporates.



Others who addressed the dharna include CCGWE general secretary M. Krishnan and its former general secretary KKN Kutty, School Teachers Federation of India general secretary C. N. Bharati, BSNL Employees Union deputy general secretary Swapan Chakravorty; and leaders of AISGEF – general secretary A. Srikumar, assist general secretaries Subhas Lamba and Manjul Kumar Das and others.

*(Inputs: Subhas Lamba)*

## **Beedi**

### **Beedi Workers on Agitational Path**

All India Beedi Workers Federation (AIBWF) of CITU held its national working committee meeting at Kannur in Kerala on 27-28 February. It has 9 state units in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Bihar and Tripura and a small organization in Madhya Pradesh. It has no state unit in Assam, Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh where Beedi workers are present in sizeable number.

The meeting noted that beedi workers livelihood was severely affected due to demonetisation. After the formation of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of beedi workers in 2001, 10 point charter of demands was submitted to the prime minister without any progress. The meeting formulated a 15 point charter of demands. Besides, the workers have problems in regard to beedi workers welfare schemes. There are changes in housing grants, scholarships to wards, marriage grant to daughters etc. The number of beneficiaries has come down. Medical and hospitalization system has been merged with ESI scheme, but not yet functioning. Detail clarification on this is still awaited the DG Welfare.

The meeting decided upto block level campaign on demands during March-April; 10 lakh mass signature campaign on the charter of demands; district and block / taluk level conventions followed by rallies during May-August; deputation to central government in September before going for strike later. *(Inputs: Debasish Roy)*

### **15 Point COD of Beedi Workers**

15 point charter of demands of Beedi workers mainly include Rs.300 / 1000 beedis as uniform countrywide minimum wage linked with AICPI, pegged at 5775 points, plus 25% as per 1991 Supreme Court judgement; DA @ 5 paise / point; minimum bonus @8.33%; Sufficient input materials and guaranteed 6 days work a week with 50% compensation on not giving work and one paid weekly off day; Abolition of contract system and work under principal employer; Amendments in Beedi and Cigar Act 1966, Welfare and Cess Act 1976 and Minimum Wage Act as per demand; Excise duty on all beedis without exemption; No deduction of wage on the basis of Leaf Cutting Average etc; PF account number under principal employers code; To provide identity cards and log books; All beedi workers should be listed as BPL; Alternate jobs for jobloss due to Prohibition of Tobacco Act, 2003; etc.

### **Higher Minimum Wages and a Tighter Visa Regime in US**

### **Infosys decides not to apply for H-1B visas**

Infosys decided not to apply for H-1B visas. The company instead is attempting outsourcing more work to India, reported *Economic Times* on 20 March.

Proposed bill in US Congress raised minimum wage for H-1B visa to over \$1,30,000, more than double of what it is today. The increased rhetoric around outsourcing has also made some Infosys clients wary. This is a problem that would be faced by the entire industry and not just Infosys. TCS said that it had operated in a self-imposed visa-constrained environment this year and had applied to get only about 15% of the visas for which it normally applies.

# Workers - Peasants Rallies



**Haryana**



**Assam** *(Report Page 22)*



# International Women's Day



**Gujarat** (Report Page 24)

**Kashmir**



**Haryana Mid Day Meal Workers Vidhan Sabha March** (Report Page 20)





## **Himachal Pradesh Scheme Workers Dharna before Vidhan Sabha**

*(Report Page 20)*

## **Scheme Workers Demonstration in Guwahati, Assam**



## **Rally for implementation of Supreme Court judgement on Equal Pay for Equal work at Asron in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district**



# Central Government Employees Strike



Andhra Pradesh



Kerala



Salem, Tamilnadu



North East



Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

## Tripura

### **CITU 14<sup>th</sup> Tripura State Conference**

Raising CITU's red flag high, thousands of young tribal workers in their traditional dress from the hills and four contingents of workers, each named after late founder leaders of CITU, from the plain marched with jubilation to the Ambassa motor stand to attend the open session on the eve of 3 days 14<sup>th</sup> CITU Tripura state conference on 12 February. Ambassa town was colourfully decorated with flags, festoons, banners and arches.

Chief guest, chief minister Manik Sarkar stressed on strengthening working class unity and movement with political, ideological and organizational clarity to combat secessionist and communal forces who are out to divide the toiling masses and complimenting each other when the state is moving forward in all round development despite many hurdles. CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP said that despite Modi government giving huge financial concessions to the corporates there is no sign of new industry, factory and unemployment is mounting. On the other side Rs.75,000 crores indirect tax burden has been imposed on the working and middle classes. Due to demonitisation, 10 lakhs workers lost their jobs; small and marginal traders have been affected. More than 99% notes have been deposited in the different banks as per record available with RBI. Yet, where is the black money? Central government is pushing the people to cashless transaction. Again it will be another target area of the corporate sector to exploit the people in the name of user charges.

CITU Tripura state president and minister Manik Dey said that Left front government's extensive infrastructural developmental programme benefited about 1 lakh construction workers; across the state road construction helped nearly 2 lakhs transport workers' employment; with newer projects employment opportunities will increase. But for maintaining pace of developmental work, peace and harmony are needed which BJP and other isolated secessionist forces are trying to disrupt.

State general secretary Shankar Prasad Datta, MP said that the state government has launched 25 social security programmes for the working class, apart from 3 centre-sponsored programmes. Nowhere in the country can this picture be found. He stressed on bringing those workers in who are yet to come under CITU umbrella. CITU West Bengal state general secretary Dipak Dasgupta also addressed the meeting.

523 delegates, coming from all parts of the state, attended the conference. Inaugurating the business session Manik Sarkar said that CITU leadership and activists should reach to every single unorganised worker. There should be no reason why a single unit of working class people be misguided by the communal and reactionary forces. The CITU is doing a commendable job, but still there are so many unorganised workers who are to be brought under the banner of CITU. The CITU leadership should not only to organise them but also to educate politically and ideologically. Tapan Sen commended in manner in which the state conference was conducted. CITU Assam state general secretary Tapan Sharma, addressing the delegates' session, narrated the miserable condition of the working class during BJP regime in the state. Dipak Dasgupta also addressed the delegates.

Shankar Prasad Datta placed general secretary's report with tasks for future. 45 delegates, including 14 women, participated in the discussion on the report. The conference concluded with the aim and objectives and to consolidate its strength to Left Front government to be installed for 8<sup>th</sup> time, to generate mass awareness against central government's anti-people policy, to prevent conspiracy of dividing the state and to fight against false campaign against the Left Front Government. CITU shall also fight against communalism, religious fundamentalism and intolerance.

The conference elected 48 members state executive committee with 22 office bearers re-electing Manik Dey as the president, Pijush Nag as the executive president, Tapan Chakraborty as vice president and Sankar Prasad Datta as the general secretary.



## Haryana

### **Life Imprisonment to Union's Committee Members; A Biased Judgement against Maruti Suzuki Workers; Lakhs of Workers Protest**

More than 1.5 lakh industrial workers of the Gurgaon and neighbouring areas resorted to lunch boycott and thousands of workers of 6 major plants of Maruti Suzuki resorted to one hour's protest strike on the same day on 18 March soon after Gurgaon session court awarded punishment to 31 workers holding them guilty of violence, in which one manager died, in the multinational automobile company Maruti Suzuki's plant at Manesar in Gurgaon district of Haryana in NCR Region on 18 July, 2012; 13 of them, all of whom were the committee members of Maruti Suzuki Workers Union, Manesar, with life imprisonment under Sec.302 and Sec.304 of IPC; 5 years of rigorous imprisonment to 4 other workers; and 14 other workers imprisonment for the period they spent in judicial custody under trial and were released. 117 other workers, who spent nearly 3 years in jail and lost job, were acquitted. On the martyrdom day of the legendary leaders Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev on 23 March, CITU observed 'Sankalp Divas' throughout the statewide.

The judgement was prejudicial without concrete evidence. It was a judicial mockery. The only guilt of the workers was that they formed a union. A conspiracy was hatched by the management of this Japanese company leading to violence and a death.

Be it Congress government or BJP government in Haryana during this period, both attempted to crush unions in NCR region particularly in the multinational companies like Maruti Suzuki whose annual profit is around Rs.2200 crores. Haryana government specially appointed a private lawyer spending approximately Rs.9 crore from government's exchequer for this case.

Against this attack of state power and corporate power combine, Maruti Suzuki workers bravely faced repression and continued agitation during last 3 years. CITU Haryana state committee had significant contribution in building joint trade union movement in solidarity with fighting Maruti Suzuki workers holding rallies, bringing out jathas, organising public hearing, staging demonstrations, dharnas and hunger strikes etc.

This judgement angered lakhs of workers in the entire industrial area and evoked wave of sympathy for the incarcerated Maruti Suzuki workers. In a meeting, chaired by CITU state president Satbir Singh, an all trade union joint committee was formed at Gurgaon to extend support to Maruti Suzuki workers and solidarity with their movement. (*Inputs: Jai Bhagawan*).

### **Protest Rally at Gurgaon**

Over 8000 protester held a mass rally on Thursday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, at Gurgaon in protest against the verdict in the 2012 Maruti Suzuki case. The protesters were from 80 unions and joined by 5000 workers from over 200 factories across Gurgaon, Rewari, Alwar, Faridabad and Noida. The protesters claimed that the workers were falsely implicated; and demanded judicial enquiry and reinstatement of all the dismissed workers, *Times of India* reported.

'The protesters reiterated their demand for judicial inquiry into the unrest. They alleged that the convicted workers were picked up from their houses on the basis of the list submitted by the management. They also claimed the convicts were assaulted and made to sign on the blank paper, which were later submitted in the court as their confession.'

"These convicts are innocent and we will appeal against the district court's judgement in Punjab-Haryana High Court. We will request the court to conduct a judicial enquiry," said Kuldeep Janghu, general secretary, Maruti Suzuki Workers Union." (*From: TOI, 24 March, 2017*)

The trade unions joint front of Gurgaon organised the protest rally. On behalf of CITU, its national secretary A. R. Sindhu addressed the rally.

## CITU's Solidarity with Maruti Workers

Through a statement on 20 March, CITU expressed its deep distress and anguish at the sentence of life to 13 workers and of 5 years jail to another 4 workers of Maruti Suzuki in connection with the violence in the Manesar plant of Maruti in 2012.

The violence in 2012 was the handiwork of hired musclemen, recruited by Japanese MNC Maruti Suzuki, which was designed to create ground for crushing the union. Despite no way being responsible for the incident, the workers have been convicted on the basis of concocted evidence manufactured by the state administration, police and employer nexus in a shameless abuse of power. More than 500 workers were thrown out of their jobs and over 200 workers were thrown into jail for up to four and half years. 117 of them had to be acquitted.

However, the heinous designs of the Haryana state administration - capitalist league to crush the trade union movement in the Gurgaon industrial area could not be achieved fully. Over 1.5 lakh workers in the area boycotted lunch on 16 March in spontaneous expression of protest. The workers of Maruti and its ancillaries / subsidiaries in Gurgaon / Manesar went on complete strike for one hour in the evening shift of 18 March itself. Workers' unions in Gurgaon industrial area are preparing for united actions in solidarity with the victimised workers including filing of appeal against the convictions.

CITU denounced the ugly game of the state and capital nexus with the same vehemence with which it denounced the violence of 2012 and congratulated the workers for their immediate and united response. CITU asserts that the trade union movement will not accept and cannot be cowed down with such nefarious acts by the government employer nexus.

CITU expressed solidarity with the struggle of the Maruti workers and the initiative of the industrial workers unions of Gurgaon in support of the Maruti workers. It called upon all its state committees, all its affiliated unions and the entire trade union movement, irrespective of affiliations, to come forward in solidarity with the Maruti workers struggle for justice including the legal battle.

## Protest in Punjab against Maruti Suzuki Verdict



On 25 March, workers of Lal Jhanda Hero Cycle Mazdoor Union of CITU at Ludhiana in Punjab staged protest demonstration against Maruti Suzuki verdict and in solidarity with the convicted innocent Maruti workers and the Maruti workers' struggle.

## Demanding Wage Increase

### **MDM and Asha Workers Joint March to Vidhan Sabha**

Led by CITU, thousands of Mid Day Meal (MDM) and Asha workers, coming from different parts of the state, assembled at Panchkula and marched to Haryana Vidhan Sabha in Chandigarh and staged militant demonstration. On way, heavy police force tried to prevent their onward march and resorted to lathi charge which was condemned by CITU and both unions.

Morcha and demonstration continued till evening. The demonstrators were addressed by MDM federations' national general secretary and CITU state general secretary Jai Bhagawan, CITU state president Satbir Singh, its secretary Anand Sharma, Asha Workers Union Haryana general secretary Surekha, its president Pravesh, MDM union's president Saroj, its general secretary Sarbati and others.

MDM workers are getting only Rs.2500 as honourarium and Asha workers instead of fixed amount get only incentives. Despite earlier assurance to the delegation of the unions on 2 January by the chief minister himself, there was no increase yet.

Ultimately, on behalf of the government its housing board chairman came at meeting place and accompanied 6 members delegation to meet the chief minister and hold discussion. Later the delegation also met and discussed with secretaries of education, health WCD. Government's representative again came at meeting place and assured agreeable solution with 15 days.

The charter of demands, submitted to the government, includes implementation of 7<sup>th</sup> CPC recommendation for them, immediate increase in wage, Rs.18,000 as minimum wage, workers status, against removal from jobs and reinstatement of already removed workers, against privatisation etc.

*(Inputs: Jaibhagawan)*

## Himachal Pradesh

### **Scheme Workers Joint Vidhan Sabha March**

#### **Government Gave Specific Assurance on Wage Increase etc**

Led by CITU state committee and under the banner of their respective unions, thousands of Anganwadi, Mid Day Meal (MDM) and Asha employees, defying government's threats, jointly brought out a state level procession from Panchayat Bhavan and staged 4 hour-long sit-in and demonstration in front of the Vidhan Sabha in Shimla on 7 March demanding immediate wage increase and for other demands. Scheme workers in the state are getting much less wages compared to several other states including the neighbouring state Haryana.

Anganwadi, MDM and Asha unions' leaders and CITU state leaders including its national secretary Kashmir Singh Thakur, state president Jagat Ram and general secretary Prem Gautam addressed the rally.

A Anganwadi union delegation met the state Social Justice and Empowerment minister with their demands. The minister assured to make provision in the current budget for wage increase of Anganwadi workers, establish a welfare fund for them and increase of retirement age to 65 years and make payment of due NHRM fund.

Delegation of MDM and Asha unions met the state health minister who assured to increase wage of MDM workers and to consider on the demands of Asha workers.

Kashmir Singh Thakur congratulated the fighting scheme workers for the success of the programme and for extracting specific assurances from the government. *(Inputs: Jagat Ram)*



# One Year of Shong Tong Karchham Hydel Project Heroic Struggle

To commemorate one year's heroic struggle of the workers in Shong Tong Karchham Hydel Project in Kinnaur district, workers of Shong Tong Karchham Mazdoor Union and of JSW Hydel Project Union and local villagers brought out a joint rally and held public meeting in the district headquarter. Despite repression by Congress government, administration and management combine; dismissal of all workers from jobs; and high court's order being ignored; the struggling spirit of the workers is high.

Addressing the rally, the speakers congratulated the local toiling people for their active support to the struggling workers including more than Rs.2 lakh financial help by the peasants and Rs.2.5 lakh by Basapa Karchham Bangtu Hydel project workers. The public meeting was addressed by CITU state president Jagat Ram, vice president Rakesh Singha, the union's president Surya Negi and general secretary Shakti Kumar, JSW union president Jeevan Negi, general secretary Dinesh Negi and others. The rally adopted a resolution demanding implementation of high court's order, reinstatement of all dismissed workers and implementation of all labour laws. (Inputs: Jagat Ram)

## CITU 15<sup>th</sup> Conference Resolution

### **Against Arrest and Sending CITU Leaders and Workers to Jail; and In Support of Striking Workers of Shong Tong Hydel Project**

This 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), being held at Puri in Odisha from 26 to 30 November, 2016;

Condemns the attacks and atrocities committed by the administration-contractor-criminal nexus, under Congress government's patronage for protection of ruling party persons' vested interest; on the 900 striking workers of CITU union in Shong Tong Hydel Project of public sector Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh since 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 pursuing their legitimate claims of minimum wage with applicable special tunnel and tribal wage, overtime wage, 3-4 months due wages, appointment letter, identity cards, EPF contribution, etc; by uninterrupted imposition of Sec.144 in the entire project area, burning and bulldozing workers residences, filing false criminal cases against 97 CITU and union leaders and workers, including Sec.307 and sending them to different jails at distant places; and

As the violation of the labour laws continues despite High Court's order to Himachal Pradesh Government and principal employer H.P. Power Corporation to implement these provisions of labour laws;

Expresses its deep concern on the non-implementable bail conditions of two securities of Rs.3 lakh each of every worker totaling approximately Rs.6 crores forcing the workers to continue to remain in jail despite bail order;

Supports the demands and indefinite strike of Shong Tong Hydel Project workers;  
Demands of the Government of Himachal Pradesh to

- Withdraw cases / arrange for immediate release of the CITU leaders and workers from the jail;
- Hold judicial enquiry on the entire development since 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 in the issues related to workers strike including violation of laws by administration-contractor-criminal nexus, the vested interest behind it and the corruption involved;

Calls for solidarity action by CITU units, unions and workers in general by holding workers meeting, adopt supporting resolution and sending those to the chief minister of Himachal Pradesh.

## Rajasthan

### **Joint Trade Union Rally**

About 15,000 workers, mainly of CITU and AITUC, and of INTUC, HMS, RCITU and AICCTU, coming from all districts and from different organised and unorganised sector of industries, including large number of women workers of Anganwadi, Mid Day Meal and other schemes, construction and beedi; jointly marched from Martyrs Memorial to Civil Line Gate in the state capital Jaipur on 25 March reminding BJP's Vasundhara Raje state government about its 14 point charter of demands, submitted earlier, including demands to withdraw all anti-labour state amendments in labour laws by Raje government; to stop privatisation of state public sector enterprises; to fix Rs.18,000 as minimum wage in the state; for same pay for same work; to recognise scheme workers as 'workers', minimum wage and immediate wage increase for them; to remove restriction on unions' registration; to implement 7<sup>th</sup> CPC recommendation for state government employees etc.

On reaching Civil Line Gate, the rally converted into a joint mass meeting addressed by national vice president J. S. Majumdar and state president Ravidra Shukla of CITU; state president of AITUC Mangilal Yadav, Jagdish Srimali of INTUC, Mukesh Mathur and state secretary Mukesh Gehlot of HMS, Rampal and Gopi Kishan of RCITU, Shankarlal Choudhury of AICCTU; and leaders of bank, insurance, central government and state government employees.

## Telangana

### **Singareni Collieries Contract Workers Began Indefinite Strike**

About 20,000 contract workers of Singareni collieries went on indefinite strike from 15 March under the Joint Action Committee of all contract workers unions demanding coal India wages, bonus, equal wages for equal work and implementation of labour laws. They are not being paid bonus for last 10 years and Coal India wages for last 4 years.

Management neither responded to strike notice of 17 February nor attended conciliation meeting called by the ALC. Instead, the management and administration launched attacks of the workers; imposed Sec.144 preventing any procession, demonstration, rallies etc; posted police in all mines and offices; arrested leaders at night from their residences and bringing outside labour under police escort to break the strike. Undaunted, the workers are carrying on complete strike and shifted agitation in front of district collectorate.

*(Inputs: B Madhu)*

## Assam

### **Workers – Peasants Joint Rally**

Thousands of workers and peasants, coming from different parts of the state, held a huge joint protest rally, by the side of river Brahmaputra in the state capital Guwahati, on 26 February. The rally was jointly organised by the Assam state committees of CITU and AIKS.

Addressing the rally, AIKS all India leader Ashok Dhawale, CITU leader and All India Plantation Workers Federation general secretary Jiaul Alam; Assam's veteran peasant leader Hemen Das and state general secretary Tiken Das, CITU state vice president Deben Bhattacharya and general secretary Tapan Sharma condemned the BJP's central and state governments' anti-people neoliberal economic policies, evictions and communal divisions targeting the Muslim minorities. The rally demanded that unless alternative residential arrangements are made, there should not be any eviction from animal sanctuaries; permanent solution to flood and subsidence and remunerative prices for agricultural produce; against anti-worker labour laws amendments; scheme workers be recognised as workers, to stop disinvestment etc.

*(From: Shramik Andolan, March, 2017)*

# INTERNATIONAL

## **New York Taxi Drivers Stood in Solidarity with Striking Uber Drivers in Qatar and India**

By a statement on 17 February, 19,000 strong New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA) stood in solidarity with 5-day long strike of 700 Uber taxi drivers at Doha in Qatar and thousands of striking Uber drivers at New Delhi in India. Both the strikes were against rate cuts and Uber's global monopoly tactic of flooding streets with vehicles making it harder for each driver to make a living.

Uber drivers in Delhi were mobilized after a fellow Uber driver committed suicide from the persistent poverty and pressure to make lease payments. Uber's only response was to file an injunction against the drivers' organizations for striking. Qatar Uber's drivers face low wages and facing deportation being migrant workers risking losing work visas when they cannot keep up with car leases due to low pay. Issue of strike is cuts in fare rates coupled with higher Uber commission.

While the multinationals often explain away deplorable treatment by pointing out lack of labour law in countries like Qatar, the reality is, Uber does not respect labor law anywhere, whether in Doha, New Delhi or New York.

For Uber, low fares mean an edge over the competition. For drivers, it means poverty and a race to the bottom economics with horrible suffering - from bankruptcy to possible deportation - where no worker wins. In New York, Uber continues to dispatch illegal trips to drivers, putting them at risk of criminal arrest if ticketed which could result in delayed eligibility for naturalized citizenship or face lower ratings which lead to lower fares, fewer jobs, or firing. Driver arrests due to Uber's illegal dispatching could mean deportation.

*(From: statement of NYTWA)*

## Greece

### **Syriza Govt's Attempt to Criminalize TU Action**

On 16 March, a judicial court in Greece has put on trial 35 leaders of WFTU affiliate PAME including the presidents of dozens of trade unions and federations. The government accused the union functionaries for allegedly causing damages in the labour minister's office during a protest demonstration on 30 January, 2013 which was staged in protest against the provocative statement of the labour minister on Public Social Security.

In the earlier trial on the same case all the accused were acquitted. However, faced with the new demands of business groups and the agreement between the Syriza government and EU-IMF, the key aspect of which is the abolition of trade union rights and freedoms including the new anti-workers' measures on the right to strike; the Syriza government is resetting the trial to send a message, to intimidate the workers in silence and to pave the way for new attacks.

In response, PAME is intensifying its action and preparing the workers for a nationwide general strike. PAME called for condemnation of the government's attempt to criminalize trade unions actions.

# WORKING WOMEN

## Gujarat Anganwadi Employees observed International Women's Day in Police Detention

3,000 Anganwadi workers and helpers under the banner of Gujarat Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union of CITU, coming from different parts of the state, had to observe International Women's Day in police custody in Ahmadabad on 8 March, 2017 by burning Gujarat government's effigy and holding meeting. They were led by CITU national secretary and Anganwadi CITU federation AIFAWH general secretary A. R. Sindhu, CITU state and also the union's president Arun Mehta and others.

Gujarat Anganwadi employees were under police detention because the prime minister Narendra Modi was in the town for publicity meeting of women panchayat members of the country on 7-8 March in Ahmadabad. Gujarat government denied permission to the CITU Anganwadi union for the rally and declared Sec.144 throughout the city.

To prevent the rally, on the plea of Assembly session, the WCD issued order to Anganwadi employees to remain in their respective centres; the employees were threatened; vehicles from districts were stopped from entering the city; CDPOs and supervisors were deputed to threaten the workers; some of the district leaders of the union were called to the police station on 7 March and detained unofficially; police went to the houses of some leaders and prevented them from leaving; BMS leadership was used to attempt to break the unity of the struggling workers.

Despite these, by 9.30 am, nearly one thousand Anganwadi employees reached outside Gandhi Ashram for the rally. Police cordoned off the place and before the procession could start, arrested the leaders including A. R. Sindhu, Arun Mehta, union's leaders Kailash, Naseemben and AIDWA state general secretary Naliniben. They were all taken to the police station and detained there till Modi left Ahmadabad in the evening. More than 3000 Anganwadi employees from 10 districts were arrested. Till 2 PM the employees were arrested in batches and sent to the detention place. A meeting was held while in custody. A. R. Sindhu narrated the history and significance of the International Women's Day.

With their grit and determination, the employees forced the government to agree for discussion on their service conditions. The state budget provided paltry increase of Rs.750 to workers and Rs.375 to helper on 20 February. Yet, Gujarat pays much less wages to Anganwadi employees – workers Rs.4750 and helpers Rs.2250 as against Rs.10,000 for workers and Rs.7000 to helpers in Kerala. Agitated by the meagre increase, a state convention of the union on the same day on 20 February decided to stop work and sit in continuous dharna from the very next day 21 February to 8 March culminating into a state level dharna at Gandhi Ashram in Ahmadabad. The workers sat on dharna from 21 February at district headquarters.

The union decided to organize demonstrations at the district level on 16 March and to hold meetings and conventions at all levels to consolidate the union.

## CITU Workshop on 'Sexual Harassment at Workplace'

As was decided in the 11<sup>th</sup> convention of AICCWW (CITU) and the 15<sup>th</sup> conference of CITU, workshop on 'Sexual Harassment at Workplace' was held on 25-26 February in Chennai for CITU functionaries including its state general secretaries/presidents, the persons in charge of working women, CITU women working committee members, working women state coordination committees conveners and conveners of women's subcommittees of the federations. 55 such functionaries from 15 states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telengana, UP and West Bengal; one federation, CWFI and CITU centre participated.

CITU president K. Hemalata, presided. General secretary Tapan Sen inaugurated the workshop. A note on general misconception about the issue and necessity to take it up was presented by AICCWW (CITU) Convener A. R. Sindhu. A note on the legal provisions was circulated separately.



19 participants took part in the discussion. Experiences of incidents, how the unions and CITU took them up and could succeed, and how it helped in advancing CITU organizationally and politically etc were shared in the discussion. Experiences of insensitivity and lack of information and skills to deal with such cases were also discussed. There was a suggestion from almost all participants that CITU should bring out a handbook on dealing with sexual harassment at the workplace.

On the second day, Hemalata placed the issue of sexual and other kinds of harassment within the organisation and how important it is to deal with these in time and in a sensitive way. 29 participants spoke on the issue. Apart from the issues of sexual harassment and exploitation, wider forms of discrimination and harassment which women face within the organisation came up in discussion.

Generally, cases of sexual harassment are dealt with very strictly, sensitively and speedily within the organisation. But incidents of sexual harassment, trying to keep the issue under the carpet, trying to influence the complainants, etc were reported. Many forms of gender based discrimination and harassment, ranging from passing obscene or double meaning remarks in the name of jokes to physical manhandling, were reported. From many states it is reported that there is differential treatment to single, separated women and widows than women with family support. Even discrimination in wages and in allotting vehicles to women whole timers was reported.

Tapan Sen concluded the discussion. He emphasised that it will be the CITU's priority to address such discrimination within the organisation. He cautioned the participants about the deviation of making this a fight between the genders. We have to always keep in mind that it is a fight against the discriminatory social order. The workshop concluded with closing remarks by Hemalata.

The workshop proposed the tasks, to be finalized by the CITU, which include Similar workshops at the state and district level; Joint campaign along with the subcommittees of fraternal trade unions – AISGEF, CCGEW, BEFI, AIIEA, BSNLEU etc; Survey on the existence of complaints committees in government and public sector, private sector and unorganised sector; Awareness campaign among affiliated unions / fraternal trade union organisations in the offices, factories, establishments and different sectors in the organised / unorganised sectors; Demand for effective mechanisms to prevent and deal with the issue to be included in the charter of demands of the CITU unions; A hand book to be prepared for the activists on 'Sexual Harassment at the Workplace'; and A separate joint campaign on violence against women to be planned along with other mass organisations.

## Modi Government's Decision

### **Not to Disclose and Limitless**

### **Corporate Funding to Political Parties**

**While talking about fighting corruption, Modi government has not only widened the process of corporate funding to political parties but also created new avenues for large-scale money laundering.**

**The amendment, slipped into the provisions of Finance Bill 2017 in the current session of the Parliament, the “*limit of 7.5 per cent of net profit of the last three financial years*” and “*the requirements of a company to disclose the name of the political parties to which a contribution has been made*” have been deleted. The Companies Act, as amended now, allows corporates to pay political parties an unlimited amount through the Election Bonds Scheme without disclosing the beneficiaries' name.**

**CPI(M) has consistently demanded banning of corporate funding to political parties as this constitutes the fountainhead for corruption at high places.**

*(From: the statement of CPI(M), 23 March, 2017)*

**CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS (GENERAL) FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS  
(BASE 2001=100)**

State	Centre	Dec. 2016	Jan. 2017	State	Centre	Dec. 2016	Jan. 2017
AP	GUNTUR	271	270	MHR	MUMBAI	282	281
	VIJAYWADA	268	267		NAGPUR	303	303
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	275	274		NASIK	288	289
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	250	252		PUNE	276	273
	GUWAHATI	241	241		SHOLAPUR	295	292
	LABAC SILCHAR	259	253	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	291	290
	MARIANI JORHAT	240	238		ROURKELA	290	281
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	239	236	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	288	293
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	302	297	PUN	AMRITSAR	273	272
CHD	CHANDIGARH	271	273		JALANDHAR	274	274
CHS	BHILAI	308	307		LUDHIANA	277	274
DLI	DELHI	249	249	RJN	AJMER	257	257
GOA	GOA	285	290		BHILWARA	267	267
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## Vimal Ranadive Bhawan Inaugurated



On the centenary year of International Women's Day, CITU president K. Hemalata inaugurated Comrade Vimal Ranadive Bhawan as the state centre of Anganwadi Mulajim Union (AMU) of CITU at Sirhind in the Fatehgarh Sahib district near Chandigarh in memory of legendary woman trade union leader of CITU Vimal Ranadive, CITU national secretary, founder president of CITU Anganwadi employees federation AIFAWH, founder-convener of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) and leader of several industry union / federation. She was the editor of the CITU journals *The Voice of the Working Woman* and *Kamkaji Mahila* for many years. Vimal Ranadive was also the founder vice president of AIDWA.

On this occasion, a colourful rally and public meeting was held there to celebrate the International Women's Day. Addressing the rally Hemalata called upon the CITU workers to further strengthen and widen the struggle for the rights of women and for their equality in every sphere of life; and fight against capitalist and feudal ideologies for the emancipation of the women. She condemned Modi government at the Centre and Badal government in the state for their failure to address the basic issues and problems of women.

AIFAWH president Usha Rani, AMU general secretary Subhash Rani and AIDWA general secretary Krishna Kumari also addressed the rally. AMU president P. Harjeet Kaur presided.



## State Govt. Employees Rally in Delhi

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CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen Addressing

## Bank Workers-Officers Total Strike



Mumbai



Chandigarh

(Report Page 7)



**CITU Vice President A. K. Padmanabhan inaugurating  
BSNL Casual, Contract Workers Rally in Delhi**