



THE WORKING CLASS

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CITU Foundation Day 2017



BTR Bhawan, New Delhi



Punjab

West Bengal

March to 'Nabanna'

(Report Page - 18)



(From top) (i) Marching from Rani Rashmoni Road; (ii) Breaking barricade at Khidirpur; (iii) Teargas shelling on the protesters; (iv) Police brutality.

WORKING CLASS

JULY 2017

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Editorial

Understanding Issues of Current Peasant Struggle

To build workers-peasants unity, there is urgent need for the working class movement to understand the major issues of current peasants' struggle sweeping the country.

The topmost issue is comprehensive cost plus at least 50% as minimum support price (MSP) of agricultural produce. Recent peasants' agitation and martyrdom of 6 peasants in police firing in Mandsaur of Madhya Pradesh is mainly for MSP of pulses.

The other issue is loan waver. Absence of remunerative prices and crop failures forced the peasants taking loan, often becoming victim of usury, as the land cannot be left without cultivation. Thousands of peasants have been committing suicides to escape from such debt-trap. Central government's notification banning cattle trades in the cattle markets have created serious additional miseries on the peasants; for animal husbandry is important part of rural economy next only to agriculture. Demonitisation forced distress selling of agricultural produce to private traders for cash money to purchase inputs for next cultivation.

Prime minister Narendra Modi had called MNREGA as the "living monument of UPA's failure" and resorted to successive budgetary cuts and delayed payments of it depriving the rural poor of alternative earnings for survival. In 2017 Modi government has withdrawn MNREGA workers from getting social security coverage under schemes of Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Boards. Cuts in subsidies on fertilizers and other inputs; withdrawal of kerosene oil and sugar from PDS; breakdown of PDS in rural areas have aggravated peasants miseries. In the face of countrywide peasants protest, Modi government backed out from Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and

Resettlement (Amendment) Act, 2015 which was to facilitate the corporates. The task was left to the state governments. Mainly BJP led state governments now have taken the lead to amend state laws and adopting measures to provide land to the corporates and to loot the natural resources. Jharkhand government's move to amend CNT and SPT Acts depriving tribals' rights on land are glaring examples.

India's rising inequality: India's richest 1% now holds 58% of country's total wealth — higher than the global figure of about 50%. (*Oxfam report*) Within this, there is growing disparity between rural and urban India with monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) in rural being Rs.281 and urban Rs.458 in 1993-94 rising to Rs.1430 in rural and Rs.2630 in 2007-2008. (*NSS report*).

Added to the peasants' woes is the communal divisive policies of BJP-led governments and other RSS outfits creating social tension and diverting attention from the real issues of the rural masses. In this condition, the working class must step in and unify the masses for action on peasants' livelihood demands.

Working Class and October Revolution

*(Extracts from book 'May Day to October Revolution –
Glorious Struggles of the Working Class' by Swadesh Dev Roye)*

It is a part of history that militant, pervasive and protracted strike struggles played a pivotal role in the revolutions in Russia. Prior to proceeding to present the picture of the working class struggles in Russia, it would be worthwhile to mention that the importance of revolutionary perspective and sharpness of strike struggles by working class drew deep attention of Lenin. He wrote specifically on strike struggles right from the last days of nineteenth century.

In 1899 Lenin wrote a pamphlet 'On Strike'. He addressed the workers asking them to conduct strikes as class struggle not only against the employers for immediate economic gains but also to direct them against the capitalist class as a whole and their governments. According to Lenin, strike ought to teach the workers the nature, not only of the capitalists, but of the government and their anti-worker policies. He noted, 'Strikes teach the workers to unite, they show them that they can struggle against the capitalists only when they are united; strikes teach the workers to think of the struggle of the whole working class against the whole class of factory owners and against the arbitrary, police government. This is the reason that socialists call strike 'a school of war', a school in which the workers learn to make war on their enemies for the liberation of the whole people, of all who labour, from the yoke of government officials and from the yoke of capital'.

Lenin also outlined how to organise, propagate and achieve success in strike actions. He noted, 'strikes can only be successful where workers are sufficiently class-conscious, where they are able to select an opportune moment for striking, where they know how to put forward their demands, and where they have connections with socialists and are able to procure leaflets and pamphlets through them. There are still very few such workers in Russia (1899), and every effort must be exerted to increase their number in order to make the working-class cause known to the masses of workers and to acquaint them with socialism and the working-class struggle. This is a task that the socialists and class-conscious workers must undertake jointly by organising a socialist working-class party for this purpose'.

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The powerful presence of militant working class in Russia was an important contributing factor for the cause of revolution. In year of the revolution – 1917, the total number of urban and rural proletarians reached 15 million, among whom factory workers were about 3.5 million. Although the proletariat constituted only about 10 percent of the total population (in 1913, 159.2 million), as Lenin put it, "its strength did not lie in its size relative to the rest of the population, but in the fact that the proletariat economically dominates the centre and nerve of the entire economic system of capitalism, and also because the proletariat expresses economically and politically the real interests of the overwhelming majority of the working people under capitalism"

.....

Another great success of the Russian working class was the welding of a strong alliance with the rural proletariat, the most reliable ally of the working class. Further the semi proletariat masses of towns and villages also allied with the working class. Millions of poor peasants had an interest in the eradication of the vestiges of feudalism and above all in the liquidation of the large landlords. Therefore, they allied themselves with the working class in the approaching socialist revolution. There was also broad support for the working class among the non-proletarian urban working people. In 1917 a significant proportion of the population in Russia's cities with a total of over 22 million inhabitants was overwhelmingly composed of craftsmen, peddlers,

and lower-echelon office workers, all of whom were victims of capitalist exploitation, both economically and socially.

The role of class conscious militant working class as the leading force for socialist revolution is an essential prerequisite to overthrow of capitalism and establish socialism. But working class by itself cannot carry out socialist revolution. The powerful presence and revolutionary role of the vanguard – the political party of the working class, is a must. Working class is the detachment and Party of the class is the vanguard. Lenin emphasised this point time and again in his writings. In fact, outlining the essential factors for a politically successful strike struggle, Lenin wrote that the organisers of the strikes require to ‘have connections with socialists and should be able to procure leaflets and pamphlets through them’.

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The class consciousness of the proletariat in the fall of 1917 was indicated by the increased activity of the factory committees, which had been organised at plants and factories everywhere, the growing number of trade unions, and the strengthening of Bolshevik influence in these unions. In October 1917 there were more than 2 million factory and office workers in trade unions. The strike movement at that time was remarkable for its exceptional stubbornness, high level of organisation, and political determination. In September and October there were strikes by the Moscow and Petrograd proletariat, the miners of the Donbas, the metalworkers of the Urals, the oil workers of Baku, the textile workers of the Central Industrial Region, and the railroad workers on 44 different railway lines. In these two months alone more than a million workers took part in mass strikes. Workers’ control over production and distribution was established in many factories and plants. This was an indication that the workers’ movement had risen to the highest stage of maturity for the onset of the revolution. As a result of the political and economic struggle, the working class had to take power into its own hands.

The working-class movement, which was socialist in character, pulled the democratic movement of the peasants along with them. Until October 1917 there were about 4,250 peasant uprisings against the landlords. In August, 690 peasant actions were recorded. In September and October the figure increased to more than 1,300. When the provisional government sent punitive detachments to suppress the peasant uprising it only enraged the peasants further. They burnt, seized, or destroyed the landlords’ estates and take personal reprisals against the most hated landlords.

At this point the revolutionary movement got a big boost when millions of soldiers came over to the side of the revolution, especially the garrisons in Petrograd, Moscow, and other cities, the Northern and Western fronts, and the sailors of the Baltic Fleet, who in September openly declared through their elected representative body, the Tsentrobalt, that they did not recognise the authority of the provisional government.

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The October Revolution was the first victorious socialist revolution in history, accomplished in 1917 by the Russian working class in alliance with the poor peasantry under the leadership of the Communist Party (formerly, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party [Bolshevik]), headed by Great Lenin.

The Great October Socialist Revolution established the triumph and eternity of Marxism-Leninism. It opened a new era in the history of humanity: the transition from capitalism to socialism. It also proved the inevitability of socialist revolution. The October Revolution demonstrated the historical role of the working class as the most progressive and militant class force for revolutionary transformation capitalist social order.

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Yes, October Revolution has proved that socialism is eternally relevant. Now in the present period of systemic crisis of capitalism, the forces of socialism must intensify aggressive propaganda that ‘Socialism’

is the ultimate alternative; 'Capitalism' is destined to turn irrelevant with unstoppable revolutionary development of factors of production and consequent obsolescence of capitalist production relations and ultimately to be overthrown by the forces of Socialism.

It is high time for the working class, in close cooperation with agricultural workers and poor peasants to launch aggressive campaign, propaganda, agitation and action against capitalism, which is sinking deep and deeper into the systemic crisis. Since the financial meltdown in 2008 originating in the USA and the consequent onset of capitalist crisis in the country, it quickly spread to the entire Europe. Ultimately the entire capitalist world has been engulfed by the crisis. The toiling people of the globe who are the victims of barbaric exploitation of capitalist system must be mobilized, both nationally and internationally, by the class oriented working class movement.

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While standing strong for socialism and against capitalism, it is necessary to propagate with full conviction, the unique achievements by the USSR. In a short span of time, it achieved significant industrial and agricultural development; eradicated illiteracy and generalised access to education and sports. Unemployment was completely eliminated. Public health care and social protection for all were guaranteed and promoted. The rights of women, children, young people and the elderly were ensured. It also achieved high scientific and technological standards.

The USSR was the first country in the world to ensure right to work, the 8-hour maximum working day, paid holidays, the equality of rights of men and women in the family, in society and at work, maternity benefits right and protection, the right to housing, free medical care, a universal and free social security and free education. The Soviet Union scored pioneering achievements for humankind, such as putting the first artificial satellite into Space – Sputnik – and the first man in space – cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. It must be remembered that the afore mentioned rights and facilities had been extended to the people of USSR one hundred years ago, when these were unimaginable in capitalist states, let alone being implemented.

The Real Face of BJP's Haryana Government

Haryana government will challenge the acquittal of 117 former workers of Maruti Suzuki by a Gurgaon court reported PTI. It may be recalled that the same court convicted 31 employees of Maruti Suzuki, 13 of them with life imprisonment, against which there was countrywide protest.

Haryana's advocate general said, "*We have decided to file the appeal against the lower court's verdict (against acquittal).*" Besides the state government would also seek enhancement of sentence of the 18 workers who have been given jail terms ranging from 3-5 years.

(From LIVE MINT; 8 June, 2017)

SOCIAL SECURITY

CITU Condemned Government's Move to Reduce Employers' EPF Contribution from 12% to 10%

Day before EPFO's CBT meeting, CITU in a statement on 26 May condemned Modi government for attempting to reduce employers' contribution from 12% to 10%; as a huge gift to the corporates and signaling future intensification of attacks on the workers' rights on the very first day of its 4th year of rule at the centre. It is more condemnable that the proposal is initiated by its labour department.

While mouthing safeguarding workers' rights, the government's move exposes its pro-corporate policies for "ease of doing business".

Demanding its immediately withdrawal, CITU called upon all trade unions and workers for united protest.

Move Exposed, Modi Govt. Retreats

Labour department of the GOI, in the Agenda of the meeting of tripartite Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of EPFO, proposed to lower employer's PF contribution from present 12% to 10%. Government wanted the issue to be decided by the CBT in its meeting of 27 May at Pune.

But, all the trade union representatives in the meeting vehemently opposed this in the Agenda. Employers' representatives found it not desirable at this point of time. The state governments' representatives were also of the same opinion. Finally, the Government was forced to give it up from the Agenda.

Participating in the discussion, CITU Representative A. K. Padmanabhan said that it was highly deplorable that labour department itself had proposed this Agenda in the name of 'demands from various sections'. This was clearly an anti-worker move which all sections of the workers in the country would oppose tooth and nail. This was a clear cut move in the Government's agenda for 'Ease of Doing Business' for the corporates.

Issues in CBT Meeting

A.K. Padmanabhan

CITU Vice President

On Attempt of Lowering Employer's EPF Contribution

CBT meeting, held at Pune on 27 May, had one important issue for discussion. A proposal, on the basis of direction from the labour department of the Government of India, was made for "*lowering the rate of contribution to be paid by the employer and equal contribution by employees from the present 12% to 10%.*"

The argument advanced by the labour department was that, under the provisions of EPF Act, earlier, employer's share was raised from 10% to 12% on the basis of an inquiry and later gazette notification by the Government. When the Government could increase the rate, they can also reduce the same. On that basis, the Government wanted EPFO to place '*lowering the rate*' in the agenda of the CBT meeting "*for deliberation and decision*".

Their justification was that in other schemes like General Provident Fund (GPF), Contributory Provident Fund and NPS, the contribution was lower than 12% (6% from employee only in GPF; and 10% for both, employer and employee, in the two other schemes). Hence, there is need of parity of EPF with others.

Government's note stated that the employer contributes a total of 31.65% in EPF and ESI. It shows that the Government considers employee's share from his/her wage is a 'payment by the employer'! May be, next time, the Government would say that worker's wage is also employer's contribution and that they could do whatever they wanted to do with it. Reality is just the opposite. What is known as employer's contribution is also a part of wage and is calculated as part of cost to the company under that head.

In the CBT meeting, there was total opposition by the trade union members to this proposal. As CITU representative, I criticized the government and labour department for proposing this change. Employers' representatives also felt it was illogical at this point of time to reduce the share. State government representatives, who were present in the meeting, also took a similar stand. Finally, the Government was forced to drop the Agenda.

On EPFO Fund Investment

The Government has been bringing up the issue of increasing investment of EPFO funds in the share market from the present 10% to 15%. (Actually, Finance Ministry has already notified investment between 5% - 15% in the very first year when 5% was invested; which later was increased to 10%; and now wanted to increase it to 15%).

Trade unions generally used to oppose this investment in the market. But, this time only CITU and AIUTUC, among those who were present in the meeting, objected; and AITUC, who could not attend the meeting, opposed it in writing. BMS and INTUC did not oppose. So, the decision was taken to increase to 15%.

On EPF Pension above Ceiling Wage

The issue related to the Supreme Court judgement on increased pension for those who had contributed to the EPF on wages above the ceiling is still being debated. (*Working Class, May 2017*). On this issue, for those who are directly under EPFO, policy decision has been taken. Confusion prevails over the issue about the subscribers in the *Exempted* establishments. EPFO is trying to deny the increased payment to those from *exempted* units. CITU's consistent position is that these subscribers cannot be treated separately. After a lot of arguments, it was decided to discuss this issue thoroughly in the next meeting.

CITU's Pending Agenda in EPFO

CITU has its pending agenda for discussion in CBT including total review of EPS 1995, increase in minimum pension; restoration of unilaterally annulled benefits like Commutation of Pension, Return of Capital, restoration of calculations of Pensionable Salary to the 12 months average from the present 60 months. It was decided to continue the discussion on these subjects in the next meeting.

On Restoration of Commuted Value of Pension

Restoration of Commuted Value of Pension (after the commuted amount has already been paid back) was again raised by CITU. CITU has been taking up this for the last 3 years. Now, EPFO had to concede that *"the issue was approved by CBT in its 206th meeting held on 11.03.2015. The issue was sent to Labour Department on 17.08.2016 and matter is under correspondence"*.

The injustice, delay and all related issues were hotly argued by CITU and Labour Secretary has assured that she will look into the issue urgently. A decision taken in March 2015, raised by CITU again and

again, was sent to Labour Department only on 17.08.2016 and is kept pending. Government and EPFO did not have any answer to CITU's criticisms.

PF to Scheme Workers

The issue of PF for scheme workers (Anganwadi, Mid-Day Meal, Asha) was approved by CBT in March, 2017 with a suggestion of 10% contribution. Labour Department has sent these proposals to Government for decision and it is put before a Group of Ministers including Finance, Power, Coal Ministers etc. Decisions are awaited.

Unorganised Sector Workers

For the unorganized sector workers, the Government wants to identify the workers and sectors for giving them registration number for inclusion in the Social Security Schemes. This is only to bypass and delay the issue of social security to unorganized, despite having a separate legislation.

Raising Salary Ceiling

The issue of increasing the salary ceiling from 15,000 to 25,000 is pending with Finance Ministry.

Some Other Issues

- The issue of EPF for railway porters was being discussed. Railway considers them as self-employed. It was pointed out that they are having Railway passes etc and cannot be considered as self-employed. This issue will be taken up with the Railway authorities again.

On the issue of implementation EPF for contractor workers in Railway, two meetings have been held. Steps for implementation will continue.

- A scheme for withdrawal from Provident Fund to facilitate housing for PF members has been notified on 12 April, 2017. This will facilitate PF members to withdraw money, if the housing project is taken up by a society, in which the PF subscriber is a member. An agreement between HUDCO and EPFO exists to facilitate implementation of the scheme. EPFO has no financial liability. This scheme is meant for those who are members of EPFO for more than 3 years. There are other conditions also.

- The issue of Coal Mines Provident Fund being merged with EPFO was raised by CITU in the meeting. It was clarified that no discussion has taken place with EPFO by coal authorities in this regard. It is understood that coal authorities are making efforts to force the coal workers to accept the merger and then take it up with EPFO. (This is one of the issues on which coal workers are going for 3 day strike from 19 to 21 June, 2017)

Employment Profile

According to the data available with the union ministry of labour, following is the employment profile.

- **Regular Employees – 17%; Self-Employed – 46%; Rest - Contract, Casual and Temporary Employees;**
- **No. of Apprentices - increased from 1.15 lakh in 2015-16 to 2 lakhs in 2016-17;**
- **67% of Employees get Rs.10,000 or less as wages per month;**
- **In Maharashtra, 48,000 factories closed – jobloss 10 lakhs.**

(From; Speech of Tapan Sen in Govt. Employees convention)

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Public Sector

Strike and Bandh against BEML Privatisation

Meenakshi Sundaram,

CITU National Secretary & Karnataka State General Secretary

Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) workers struck work on 30 May and challenged the disinvestment policies of central government. In support, people resorted to total bandh in Kolar and partial in Mysore districts of Karnataka and total in Palakkad district in Kerala.

Responding magnificently to the call of Joint Action Front (JAF) of CPSUs in Bangalore, all regular and contract workers and majority of the executives joined the total strike on 30 May in the corporate office and in all four plants of BEML in Bangalore, Mysore, Kolar and Palakkad against the strategic sale of BEML.

In Kolar district, appreciating CITU's and its union BEMEA's appeal, people of all Taluks resorted to bandh in support of the issues of the striking workers. District collector had to declare closure of all educational institutions. Elected MLAs and MPs including of Congress and BJP had to support the issue of strike and bandh. BEML is the sole functional PSU in the district.

In Mysore also people extended overwhelming support responding to the week long campaign of BEMEA and of all central trade unions.

In Bangalore workers, CITU affiliated BEWU members in Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) went on solidarity strike.

JAF convenor Meenakshi Sundaram presided over the meeting, along with demonstration, at the gate of BEML in Bangalore. Leaders who addressed and greeted the workers include state leaders of CITU, president Varalakshmi, H.N. Gopal Gowda and K.N. Umesh; of INTUC, president Rakesh Malli and Narayanaswamy, MLC; BSNLEU leader Namboodri and others.

Pre-Strike Campaign

The strike was preceded by month-long campaign among the people on the issues by holding hundreds of street corner meetings, by public announcements in autorikshaws, distributing lakhs of handbills and bringing out two-wheeler rallies.

JAF organised several other programmes centring the instant issue of strategic sale of BEML which include relay dharna in front of BEML gates on 24-29 April; BEML workers holding rallies and gate meetings in front of respective unit on 1 May and PSU workers holding May Day rally in Bangalore; holding national CPSU meeting in Bangalore on 3 May; representation to MLAs, MPs; serving strike notice and inauguration of public campaign at Town Hall, Bangalore on 10 May; demonstrations before the offices of ruling parties of the state and of the centre on 15-16 May.

JAF congratulated all the workers and the organisations who made this strike successful. JAF will intensify the resistance in higher form and expose the pro-corporate policies of Modi government.

Disinvestment of PSUs

On 1 May 2017 Modi government approved Niti Aayog's proposal of strategic sale (*for private management*)

control) divesting 26% of out of total 54% shares of BEML held by the central government, making total 72% shares in private hands. Much before the formal approval of the cabinet, the Government started the process of strategic sale from February 2017 itself.

In August 2016, through buy back scheme, Modi government sucked out Rs.5184 Crores from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)'s reserves and surplus fund; over Rs. 2300 Crores from BEL; sold additional 5% shares through exchange-traded fund (ETF), which is managed by Reliance, and got Rs.1670 Crores. It is reported that the government may force HAL again to buy back shares for additional amounts from its reserve fund. With the splitting of each BEL share into 10 parts of Re.1, it has become easier for government to sell the shares to the corporates at cheaper rate.

PSU	Values Year 2015-16 (Rs. Crs)					Turnover 2016-17
	Turnover	Different Taxes	Dividend	Tax on Dividend	Profit Before Tax	
BEL	7521	451	408	83	1809	8800
BEML	3426	11.62	16.66	3.39	64.27	3000
HAL	16,736	1634	627.32	128	3,288	17,406

It should be noted that 7+11 = 18 CPSEs, proposed for disinvestment, are very important industries. Many of them are Navatnas and Miniratnas. Almost all the 8 DPSUs under the Ministry of Defence are subjected to disinvestment in one form or the other. Such an unprecedented attack on the bedrock of country's economic sovereignty was never attempted before by any government. They want to finish of this grand meal before their time is going to end in 2019.

Public Sector: Major Revenue Earner for Union Budget

The contribution of the public sector industries to the revenue of the Government of India is enormous. The myriad forms of revenue to the union budget during the year 2014-15 from 235 CPSUs are shown below.

Performance Parameter	Amount (Rs. Crs)
Profit Before Tax	1,50,232
Tax paid to Government	47,229
Loan Interest	56,801
Dividend to Government	56,527
Tax on Dividend	8,642

It is clear that the Government of India is earning over Rs.1,69,199 Crores from the CPSUs. That apart, the income tax paid by the employees of the public sectors, the taxes paid by purchase of goods with the wages earned by the people working in public sector also adds up to the revenue of the Government of India.

The share of the prosperity generated in the CPSEs is ploughed as revenue to the central budget. But the government should spend the money, received from the CPSEs, for people's welfare. Instead, the Government is snatching the source of peoples' wealth and handing it over to their corporate friends.

Yet another half-truth told the Government is about the objective of disinvestment that it helps to raise budgetary resources for the Government. Disinvestment will indeed get revenue for current financial year only; but, permanently cuts-off the revenue earnings in the form of dividend, taxes, etc. for all time to come. This is like killing the goose that laid golden egg.

Since last 25 years, the mal-propaganda that CPSEs are inefficient, and can be made efficient by privatising them has been exposed through our relentless struggles. All the international business ratings have put the CPSE performance at the global level.

Road Transport

10th Conference of AIRTRWF

K.K. Divakaran

CITU National Secretary & AIRTRWF General Secretary

10th conference of All India Road Transport Workers Federation (AIRTRWF), held at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, on 4-6 June 2017, started with a 5000 strong workers procession culminating into a huge rally and public meeting at Gandhi Statue near GVMC of Visakhapatnam.

Inaugurating the rally and public meeting, CITU national vice president A.K. Padmanabhan congratulated AIRTRWF for taking the lead in unifying the road transport workers throughout India and for successful successive strikes on 30 April 2015 and on 2nd Septembers in 2015 and in 2016 in which about 2 crores of road transport workers, out of total 5 crores in the country, joined.

The venue of the delegates' session at Kalabharathi Auditorium was named as Comrade Sujit Das Nagar in memory of the founder general secretary of AIRTRWF. 596 delegates and observers from 17 states attended the conference except from J&K and Uttar Pradesh. The delegates' session began with hoisting of the flag by AIRTRWF president Mohammad Amin and paying floral tributes to the martyrs.

Inaugurating the delegates' session, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen said that Motor Vehicle Act (Amendment) Bill, 2017 is for monopolization of transport sector and for privatisation of SRTCs for garnering profits by the corporates. This Bill affects even petty private transporters who, after the passage of the Bill, will be totally wiped out under heavy burden of penalties and the changed rules.

He stated that nowhere in the world public transport is running in profit and everywhere the government is subsidising the loss as public transport is for the common people and comes under essential services. It is the government's responsibility to cross subsidise the losses.

He appreciated AIRTRWF and particularly its general secretary for organising the successful nationwide strike of road transport workers on 30 April 2015 against the RT & Safety Bill, 2015. He said that general secretary's report is a treasure of data and will be helpful for campaign against the Bill.

Leaders of different fraternal trade unions participated in the conference and expressed their solidarity with the struggle of the road transport workers.

Launching the website of AIRTRWF, CITU president K Hemalata said that transport is a key sector in the Indian economy and the campaign against the Bill must be taken to the common public also. RSS is diverting attention of the people from the real issues concerning the people. She emphasised on the need to organise more workers and to take up the day to day issues concerning them.

General Secretary's report was placed by K.K. Divakaran and the statement of accounts by the treasurer K. Chandrasekhara Pillai. The report noted that the neoliberal policies being pursued by the governments in capitalist world have put the workers into oppressive living conditions; increased inequalities with richest 1% controlling over half the world's total wealth; further deepening of global economic crises with several countries taking away workers' hard won rights in the name of austerity measures. In India, aggressive neoliberal policies of BJP government at the centre are putting the public sector into difficulties, curtailing budget allocations for welfare schemes like health and education and cutting subsidies on fertilizers and

petroleum products. Demonetisation has affected millions of lives particularly the workers of unorganised sector. There was a 40% revenue loss in transport sector. The prices of essential commodities are rising continuously including diesel and petrol; BJP's promise of providing 2 crore jobs every year has been proved to be false and now the country is witnessing job losses in all sectors. The government is dividing the people on communal lines; resorting to authoritarian and fascistic measures to suppress dissent. It is also resorting to physical attacks in states like Kerala and West Bengal.

The road transport sector contributes for about 6.4% of GDP. The Motor Vehicle Amendment Bill 2017 was passed by Modi government in the Lok Sabha aiming at privatisation of entire urban and rural transport sector causing jobloss of lakhs of workers including those in private buses, lorries, school buses, automobile workshops and spare parts shops; and against the interests of the individual autos and taxis who cannot compete with the corporate entities. This Bill, which is yet to be passed by Rajya Sabha, is being opposed by all the transport workers.

Delegates participating in the discussion narrated their experiences in the states. Haryana road transport workers went on a 3-days strike, involving the common people, against the state government proposed route privatisation and compelling the government to withdraw the proposal; special efforts in Tripura to "reach the unreached", and organise more and more workers; in Assam, **massive** campaign through booklet and handbills distribution for the success of the countrywide strikes, which was joined totally by the owner's association, and 6 hours bandh and Satyagraha movement against the Bill; in Bihar, Parivahan Mitras' agitation demanding consolidated salaries who are deputed as agents in RTA offices and 27,000 joining AIRTWF; in Himachal Pradesh, road transport workers agitation pushed back the route privatisation plan; in Punjab, workers major struggle resulted in recovery to the workers of PF from the Swaraj Mazda to the extent of Rs.3.38 crores; in Andhra Pradesh, there is consolidation and increase in membership; in Tamilnadu all 80 unions, affiliated to AIRTWF, expanding to all the 3 ports in the state and increasing their membership and agitation demanding of the state government for cross subsidization.

The reports were adopted unanimously. The conference resolved that transport workers across the country would continue to fight against MV Amendment Act, 2016. The conference demanded a separate Unorganised Workers Welfare Act for the private transport workers, social security like PF, ESI, insurance, etc benefits for all transport workers, resting facilities for the drivers etc. The conference resolved to fight against the oppression on adivasis, dalits, poor OBCs, minorities and women workers; equal wages for equal work; strengthening SRTCs.

The conference unanimously elected Shyamal Chakraborty as the president, K.K. Divakaran as general secretary, R. Lakshmaiah as deputy general secretary and Chandrasekhar Pillai as treasurer. *(With inputs: R. Lakshmaiah)*

Coal

Coal Workers Strike Deferred

Government, Management Backtracked

Following successful conciliation meeting before the Dy. CLC (C) in Kolkata attended by the Dy. Secretary of the Ministry of Coal, management of Coal India Ltd and representatives of all 5 recognised coal workers federations of CITU, AITUC, BMS, INTUC and HMS held on 18 June in Kolkata and in view of the written understanding signed by all parties; the proposed 3 days coal workers strike on 19-21 June, called jointly by the 5 federations and supported by all unions of coal industry, has been deferred for 3 months.

In respect of 7 points demands, the government backtracked from proposed merger of CMPFO in EPFO; on non-implementation of NCWA-IX agreed points, continuation of existing CMPF pension, deployment of contract workers and their wages would be discussed in JBCCI-X; on early settlement of NCWA-X government assured efforts to finalise NCWA-X within next 2 months; on closure of mines case by case would be discussed in respective company / area level JCC and outcome of the discussion would further be discussed in the office of the labour commissioner; it has further been agreed that decision taken in the bipartite level cannot be altered by any other committee of the management unilaterally. *(From: AICWF statement)*

Tea

West Bengal Tea Garden Workers Successful Strike Police Brutalities on Striking Workers

Tea garden workers of all 300 tea gardens in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar districts of West Bengal were on 2 days successful strike on 12-13 June demanding increase and enforcement of statutory minimum wage. The strike was called by the united platform of tea garden workers' unions after the state government, at the behest of tea garden owners, backtracked from its earlier commitment of a negotiated settlement on these demands.

To break the peaceful strike, the state government unleashed police brutalities hounding and dragging the workers from their residential colonies and gardens, resorting to lathi-charge on workers' procession severely injuring many including large number of women and mass scale arrests slapping charges under non-bailable sections. But, the government failed to break the strike and determined resistance of the workers. At number of places militant workers demonstrations forced the police to release arrested workers from the police stations.

CITU condemned TMC government for such barbaric assaults and repression on the peaceful strike of tea-garden workers. The state government never bothered when the tea garden workers were in the midst of starvation owing to unlawful closure of many tea gardens, illegal shut-down of production etc leading to hundreds of starvation deaths. But when the workers and their unions closed their ranks to fight back, the TMC government unleashed attacks on them.

CITU congratulated the tea garden workers of West Bengal for the successful strike and their heroic resistance facing police assault.

IT

IT Workers Conference

“Present Crisis in IT Industry and Way Forward”

The workers of IT Industry, which employs close to 40 lakhs employees, have till recently been considered as professionals and did not identify themselves as workers. Following the slowdown in the industry since 2008 with global economic crisis and mass terminations beginning with TCS lay offs in 2014, IT workers felt the need get unionized. Thus, Forum For IT Employees (FITE) emerged out as India's first IT workers registered trade union which began its fight against mass dismissals and raising demands of IT workers.

On 17-18 June, at the International Institute of Tamil Studies in Chennai, office bearers of FITE and IT workers' activists, trade union activists and legal experts from Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai came together to discuss the crisis in IT industry and demands of IT workers.

The participants included 45 delegates of IT employees from TCS, Infosys, HCL, CTS, Wipro, Zoho, Caterpillar and other companies; several advocates of Supreme court and high courts, retired judge, IIM(A) professor; leader of TUCI from Mumbai, CITU state secretary Kannan, BEFI state secretary C. P. Krishnan, airport workers union leader G.S. Deepti, AIBOC general secretary Franco; other activists and journalists.

The 'conference' held in four sessions on '*Present Crisis in IT Industry*', '*Challenges Faced by IT Workers*' and on framing the charter of demands and drafting resolutions. The concluding session was chaired by FITE president Parimala with introductory speech by FITE general secretary Sathiesh and guest speakers Justice Hariparanthaman (Retd), TUCI general secretary Sanjay Singhvi, BEFI state general secretary C. P. Krishnan and DTUC president J. Chidambaranathan. Conference resolutions were presented by FITE vice president Balaji and vote of thanks by FITE working committee member Deepan.

The conference adopted 13 resolutions and a charter of demands. The resolutions mainly demanded central government's immediate intervention to stop mass termination by IT companies on the plea of advancement in technology and automation and global economic crisis, scrapping of anti-worker '*Performance Appraisal System*', strict implementation of all relevant labour laws and minimum wage for the workers in start-ups etc.

Resolutions of IT Workers Conference

- The two day IT workers conference unanimously concludes that Indian IT & ITES sector is moving towards technocratic business model which sacrifices human labour to automation (Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Cloud Computing etc.). It is as usual a profit oriented move of the industry which when combined with the global economic crisis will lead to mass job cuts in the next few years. At a time when unemployment is growing in the country, mass job cuts in one of biggest service sectors will lead to an economic crisis and social unrest. So, the government should intervene immediately to come up with a strategy to safeguard the employment of IT workers by all means.
- The global economic crisis which has adversely impacted the outsourcing model prevailing in the IT and ITES industry has its roots in the unsustainable neo liberal economic policies of the State. This conference urges the State to make its economic policy worker-centric and people oriented.
- The existing performance appraisal system is not transparent and gives room for injustice and arbitrariness leading to unfair termination from service. The existing performance appraisal should therefore be scrapped. The abuse of the performance improvement plan should be immediately stopped. Salary hikes and promotions should be based only on seniority.
- While labour laws are applicable to IT and ITES establishments, they are often flouted with impunity. All relevant labour laws should be strictly enforced in all IT and ITES establishments without any exception or exemption and stringent penalties should be imposed for violation of the laws.
- In various IT and ITES establishments, particularly in small sized establishments and start ups, the workers are paid low wages which in some cases is as low as Rs.5000 per month. Moreover, in many establishments, workers are not paid variable D.A. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that workers in IT and ITES establishments are paid a minimum wage of not less than Rs.22,000 per month with variable D.A. based on the consumer price index.
- According to All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), more than 60% of the engineers graduating from technical institutions across the country every year remain unemployed. These unemployed engineers have become the reserve workforce of the IT/ITES sector which aggravates the exploitative

working conditions of IT workers. So, the conference urges the central government to create more jobs for the unemployed graduates as promised by the Prime Minister.

- Social Inclusion of depressed castes (SC/ST) is to be ensured. At present it is less than 5% of the work force. This conference, therefore, urges the Government to implement the reservation policy in all private sector industries including IT & ITES.
- Taking into consideration, the various concerns of women workers in the IT and ITES sectors including the discrimination that they are subjected to on the basis of their pregnancy/marital status and their being forced to work in night shifts even when they do not wish to, there is an urgent need to ensure gender justice in IT and ITES establishments. The existing laws to protect the rights of women employees at the workplace including the Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplaces Act, 2013 (POSH Act) and the Maternity Benefits Act, as amended, should be strictly implemented. Internal Complaints Committees must be constituted in all establishments in accordance with the provisions of the POSH Act. There should be flexible work arrangements for women workers during the time of pregnancy/menstruation/breast feeding. Crèche facilities should be established within the company premises. Women must be deployed in night shift only with their consent. Discrimination of women workers based on pregnancy/marital status in the matter of pay hike, promotion, project assignments etc. should be stopped.
- We strongly condemn the State persecution of automotive workers in Maruti Suzuki (Gurgaon) and Pricol (Coimbatore) who are viciously punished with life imprisonment for merely demanding their right to unionise.
- We express our solidarity with sanitary workers who are struggling for permanency and TN Transport Workers who have not been paid their terminal benefits.
- In the last 2 years, there have been various attempts to introduce anti worker amendments to the labour laws and in some states such as Rajasthan and Maharashtra, these amendments have already come into effect. This conference demands that such anti worker amendments be repealed.
- We stand in solidarity with the demand of students for access to free and inclusive education for all and oppose the commercialization and communalisation of higher education at the behest of WTO and World Bank.
- We stand in solidarity with farmers and agricultural workers who are bearing the brunt of the agrarian crisis and are struggling to even meet their basic needs.

Airways

CITU Condemned Air India's Privatisation

In a statement on 31 May, CITU condemned Modi government's move to privatise national carrier Air India. Losing no time, Niti Aayog recommended outright sale of Air India writing off its Rs.30,000 crore debt burden; immediately after union finance minister's public statement justifying its privatization.

Its privatisation move is taking place just when Air India has started achieving operating profit of Rs.105 Crore in 2015-16 reducing its net loss by 34.5%; and of estimated Rs.300 Crore for 2016-17. Air India's debt consists mainly of accumulated debt service charges. It never defaulted in paying bank loans contrary to what private corporates, including private airlines, are doing causing huge bank NPAs.

After substantial capital investment from national exchequer; equity infusion of Rs 24,723.74 Crore with budgetary support; procurement of 23 new aircrafts with another 7 aircrafts being on the pipeline; Modi government is now preparing to hand it over to private sector with a bonus of Rs.30000 crore debt-burden being

written-off. Privatization of Air India is going to be a Rs.50,000 crore plus bonanza to private buyer when latest budgetary support and written-off debt liability are taken together.

Privatization of Air India is not for saving public money, but for frittering away national asset and exchequer for the benefit of private corporate and private airlines, both domestic and foreign, CITU statement said.

CBI Enquiry on Air India

Till 2007 Air India was a profit making company. It started incurring huge losses since 2008 immediately after Air India - Indian Airlines merger in 2007. The CAG had called it 'ill-timed' and stated, "The financial case for the merger was not adequately validated prior to the merger."

Recently, CBI registered three FIRs and a preliminary enquiry (PE) against unidentified officials of Air India, ministry of civil aviation and others.

The first is on allegations relating to purchase of 111 aircraft for the national airlines costing about Rs70000 crore to benefit foreign aircraft manufacturers and allegedly causing huge financial loss to the national carriers. The CAG had in 2011 questioned the rationale behind the government's decision to order 116 airplanes for Air India and Indian Airlines - 48 from Airbus and 68 from Boeing calling the decision a "recipe for disaster". The second case pertains to leasing of a large number of aircraft without due consideration, proper route study and marketing or price strategy. The third case involves allegations of surrender of profitable routes and timings of Air India to favour national and international private players which allegedly caused a "huge" loss to the state-run carrier.

CBI's action follows the Supreme Court's 5 January, 2017 direction on a petition filed by the Centre for PIL led by lawyer Prashant Bhushan. *(From: Live Mint, 29 May 2017)*

Government

Joint Convention of State & Central Govt. Employees

Thousands of different levels leading functionaries of All India State Government Employees Federation (AISGEF) and the Coordination Committee of Central Government Employees and Workers (CCCGEW), coming across the country, met in a joint national convention in New Delhi on 10 June, with Subhas Lamba of AISGEF and K.K.N. Kutty of CCCGEW in the presidium, demanding scrapping of National Pension Scheme (NPS) and reverting the employees, joining service 2004 onwards, back to old pension scheme; regularisation of all contract, casual and temporary employees; and implementation of Equal Pay for Equal Work.

Inaugurating the convention, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen congratulated this joint effort; condemned Modi government for its statistical data jugglery to establish its false claims of country's development at 7% of GDP which in reality is 5.5%; Rs. 8-10 lakh crores of government's annual concessions to the corporates; widening profit-wage disparity and wage-loss; rising unemployment and closures with huge job-loss; rising prices; privatisation, monopolization and rise of foreign aggregators in road transport; NPS for private profiteering; and with growing capitalist crisis shifting the burden on the workers and the people.

The convention resolution was moved by AISGEF general secretary Sreekumar and seconded by CCCGEW general secretary M. Krishnan. The convention adopted joint action programme through July – November by organising joint state conventions, district and lower level campaign and 21 November state level joint rallies and dharnas. *(Inputs: Subhas Lamba)*

STATES

West Bengal

Peasants - Workers - People's Historic March

Initiated by Left-led peasants and agricultural workers organisations; joined by CITU and other trade unions and organisations of youths, students, women and others; and supported by Left parties; more than a lakh people began their march (named as '*Nabanna Abhiyan*') to *Nabanna*, the state government's headquarter in Howrah, on 22 May from 5 locations in Kolkata and Howrah in pursuance of 18 points demands on the burning issues of workers, peasants and other sections of the people of the state.

The *Abhiyan* was the culmination of two month long statewide micro level explanatory campaign on issues and for mobilization in all the districts holding hundreds of urban ward and village meetings and through different innovative methods. During the campaign, district and local level demands were added.

Despite summer heat, all five starting points of the March were choked with waves of people coming from all over the state with red flags, banners and placards. Leaders, including all India Kisan Sabha leader and CPI(M) state secretary Suryakanta Misra, addressed the gatherings before the March calling upon the people to make the peaceful *Nabanna Abhiyan* on people's demands as historic one.

However, Mamata Banerjee led TMC government had other intension, not to allow the March to reach government secretariat and not to receive the memorandum on people's demands. The authoritarian TMC government refused to accept people's peaceful and democratic movement and receive people's demands. The chief minister suddenly left Kolkata for district visit. Steel barricades, water cannons, armoured vehicles with special police force were mobilized with thousands of policemen. The state administration blocked all roads to Nabanna and virtually converted it as a war zone against the people and their peaceful democratic movement.

Police erected barricades on all five roads on way to Nabanna. But, the people wanted to proceed breaking barricades. Police resorted to brutal lathi charge, fired teargas shells and used water cannons not even sparing the leaders, elderly and the women. Police attack was most brutal at Esplanade and Khidirpur areas. More than 900 protesters including Left leaders were injured due to police brutality and about 450 of them needing hospitalization. Several journalists were also injured in the police attack. Several leaders were taken to police custody.

Despite police attacks, push and pull continued for more than two hours at all police barricades. The resurgent people were determined to fight against the authoritarian government. The twin cities of Kolkata and Howrah reverberated with the struggling people's slogans.

But it was a surprise for the administration when Left Front MLAs reached the north gate of Nabanna and staged demonstration. 24 Left MLAs were detained by the police.

The entire state rose in protest next day staging rallies and protest demonstrations. In Kolkata, a large procession marched from Lenin statue. Opposition legislators strongly protested inside the assembly.

Joint Trade Union Protest

West Bengal units of six central trade unions - CITU, INTUC, AITUC, TUCC, UTUC and AICCTU – and of national and state federations of employees of banks and insurance, FMRAI, 12 July Committee and Mercantile Federation, in a joint meeting on 30 May, decided to bring out protest rallies against police brutality

and authoritarian attitude of TMC government in all districts and from Dharmatala Y Channel to College Square in Kolkata on 2 June. It was also decided to launch massive campaign on 18 point people's demands at all work places and workers residential areas during 1 – 7 June. (From: *People's Democracy*, 22-28 May; and *Ganashakti*, 31 May, 2017)

WFTU Solidarity

In statement on 24 May from Athens, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) said, “Violent repression of the farmers’ demonstration was held on 22th May in Kolkata, eastern India. The result of the barbaric attack of the forces of repression is 900 injured protesters including 100 seriously injured who are in critical condition.

“The World Federation of Trade Unions, representing 92 million workers in the 5 continents, expresses its firm solidarity with the protesters and strongly condemns the repression incidents, which frequently occur especially in the Kolkata area.

The WFTU supports the fair demands of the protesters for the improvement of their working and living conditions.

Jharkhand

Anganwadi Employees Mahapadav

Responding to the call of Jharkhand State Anganwadi Sevika–Sahayika Sangh, hundreds of ICDS employees staged their 24 hours state level Mahapadav before the state assembly at Birsa Chowk in Ranchi on 30 May demanding increase in the budgetary allocation for ICDS, to stop its privatisation, Rs.18000 as minimum wage and Rs.3000 as minimum pension, implementation of 45th ILC recommendations, and ESI–EPF social security coverage.

Inaugurating the Mahapadav, CITU national secretary and president of Anganwadi employees’ national federation, AIFAWH, Usha Rani said that before coming to power at the centre in 2014 election BJP promised wage increase to Anganwadi workers and helpers. But, in the very first budget, Modi government resorted to 60% fund cut in ICDS. Now the government’s intension is privatise ICDS to deprive the mothers and children of the country from this social security benefits. ICDS played significant role in reducing child malnutrition and mothers’ and children’s mortality rates when about 50% of the children are suffering from malnutrition and 80% women are suffering from anemia. ICDS has been serving about 8 crores of children and 1.5 crores of pregnant and lactating mothers for which Supreme Court also commended the role of ICDS. The Mahapadav was led by CITU state leader Sanjay Paswan, Sabitri Soren, Meera Purnima, Animikha, Manju Santoshini, Draupadi Kisku, Sushila Hansda, Neenu Murmu, Mamta Tudu. Public meeting was presided over by Umesh Misra. (Inputs: Sabitri Soren, AIFAWH state unit secretary)



Tamilnadu

Campaign against Communalism

In the background of rising communal attacks by the right wing forces, CITU Tamilnadu state committee observed CITU foundation day as People’s Unity Day in all districts by hoisting red flags and holding conventions,



Public Meeting at Coimbatore

workshops and campaigning against communalism. Based on CITU's 15th conference commission paper on communalism a note was prepared by the state centre for the campaign. A blood donation camp was organised by CITU Tiruvarur committee

At Coimbatore, a public meeting was held on this day to commemorate the birth centenary of CITU's founder member K. Ramani. T.K. Rangarajan MP, AITUC state president Subburayan, writer Madhukoor Ramalingam and Praveen Sultana addressed the public meeting. (*Inputs; K.C. Gopikumar*)

Punjab

Campaign for 29 June Statewide Protest

CITU Punjab state committee launched statewide month long campaign to make CITU's National Protest Day 29 June successful throughout Punjab.



On 18th day of the campaign an impressive rally was held in front of the gate of the Hero Cycle in Ludhiana. On 19th day, rally was held at the gate of Swaraj Mazda factory joined by over 1000 workers. Rally was held by CITU workers at Asron Industrial Area in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district.

During campaign four issues of National Protest Day were explained in the background of central and state government's anti-workers and anti-people policies; and divisive and diversionary policies of ruling dispensation at the centre. The rallies also raised demands for equal pay for equal work and enforcement of labour laws.

The rallies were addressed by state general secretary Raghunath Singh and other CITU leaders including Gurjant Singh, Jatinder Pal Singh, Amarnath Koom Kalan, Hanuman Prasad Dubey; Gurdev Singh Bagi, Jaswant Singh, Nawan Shehar and others.

WORKERS-PEASANTS UNITY

Countrywide Farmers Protest

At the call of AIKS and other organisations, farmers joined by other toiling sections observed countrywide Protest Day on 16 June against the brutal killing of 6 farmers in Mandsaur of Madhya Pradesh and against anti-farmer policies of the BJP government by resorting to road blockades and picketings; burning effigies of the prime minister, union finance minister and Madhya Pradesh chief minister; bringing out rallies; staging demonstration etc.

In West Bengal, Protest Day was observed in all 355 blocks in Bengal with massive participation. In Kerala roads were blocked in all districts and effigies were burnt. In Tripura despite heavy rains at every point thousands attended the protests. Across Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Tamilnadu, Jharkhand the peasants came on the streets.

In Madhya Pradesh, AIKS state secretary Ram Narayan Kuraria and over 100 farmers staging protest were arrested at Rewa. Farmers were also arrested at Kailaras in Morena district and at other places. Over 1,500 protestors were arrested across the state. The national highway was blocked at many places.

In Rajasthan massive protests were held demanding loan waiver, remunerative prices, resignation of Shivraj Chauhan and withdrawal of notification restricting cattle trade. After Mahapadav where collectorate was gheraoed the authorities in Sikar agreed for government procurement of onions at fair price and agreed to address other demands concerning the state. In Haryana, dharnas and protests were organised since 14 June 9 districts. In some districts collectorates were gheraoed.

In Punjab, road blockades were organised across the state and protest continued for next 7 days with the same demands. Bihar, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir observed Protest Day on 14 June and Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka on 12 June. Processions, effigy burning and protests were held in different places of Uttar Pradesh. In Tamilnadu massive protest was held jointly at Thiruvavur on 14 June followed by protests by Tamilnadu Vivasayigal Sangham on 16 June. In Telangana in all districts road blockades were organised jointly by Telangana Rythu Sangham and All India Agricultural Workers' Union. In Odisha, big participation was recorded in all places. Constituents of the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan also played an active part in these protests.

Over 100 organisations met in Delhi on 16 June and decided to have coordinated actions in coming days.

CITU's Support to Farmers Struggle

CITU denounced the continuing repression of farmers' struggle in various parts of the country while pursuing their livelihood related just demands in the background of aggravating agrarian crisis and farmers' distress. CITU condemned brutal killings of six farmers by BJP government in Madhya Pradesh.

CITU extended full support to AIKS and their associated organisations in the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan leading the surging countrywide farmers' struggle and their call for nationwide protest on 16 June demanding implementation of Swaminathan Commission's recommendation on MSP, comprehensive loan waiver for farmers including the lowest strata, withdrawal of notification on ban on cattle trade and resignation of Shivraj Singh Chouhan government in Madhya Pradesh for killing of six innocent farmers.

CITU called upon the workers throughout the country to join Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan and AIKS led nationwide Protest Day on 16 June.

Sitaram Yechury's Letter to Prime Minister on Peasants Distress

In a letter to the prime minister on 15 June, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, MP has drawn his attention to "the plight of farmers across India, which has resulted in a high level of rural distress, including thousands of suicides by farmers in the past three years. There have been increasing protests by farmers in one state after another, which have been met by your silence and apathy while the state governments of your party have let the police lose on the poor farmers. Six farmers have lost their lives in police firing in Madhya Pradesh, many seriously injured. Meanwhile, many continue to commit distress suicides, the latest such tragedy occurring in the CM's own constituency."

He reminded the prime minister, "during your election campaign, you had promised a Minimum Support Price that will provide a 50% net profit to the farmer over his production costs. During the last three years, you have done nothing to fulfill this promise. The current MSP for various crops fixed by your government barely provides any returns to the farmer."

"The two government agencies, FCI and NAFED, do not buy all the produce of the farmer, even at the existing MSP, forcing the farmer to distress sell his produce at a loss in the market.

Sitaram in his letter raised **"demand that your government introduce and pass a legislation in the forthcoming monsoon session of parliament which not only confers on farmers the Right to Sell at MSP, but also guarantees an automatic annual review of the MSP which will be, at least, 50 per cent more than the comprehensive production costs as established by the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) for that year."**

Joint Call of AIKS, AIAWU and CITU

Central leadership of AIKS, AIAWU and CITU held joint meeting on 16 June at BTR Bhawan in New Delhi; reviewed joint implementation of workers-peasant solidarity day on 19 January; and discussed the current situation of acute agrarian distress and the surging peasant struggles and joint movement.

The meeting appreciated intervention of the AIKS against the killing of the farmer Pehlu Khan; its leadership role in the peasants struggle in many states including in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana; and its role in building joint movement on immediate issues. The joint platform of Akhil Bharateeya Kisan Sangharsh Samanvaya Samiti (All India Peasant's Struggle Coordination Committee) of 130 peasant organisations is formed with a core group of 11 organisations including AIKS on demands of remunerative price (and procurement) and loan waiver.

The AIAWU has also planned series of campaign and actions including holding a national convention on employment and wages by 15 September 2017 on agricultural workers' demands.

In this situation, the meeting strongly felt the urgent need of joint interventions and initiatives at all levels, especially at the grass root, on common burning issues of the peasantry, agricultural workers and workers in general; and decided to have joint state level meetings of state centre's functionaries of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU before June end to plan joint activities and to immediately send reports on the plan of activities to the respective all India centres.

PMFBY - A Big Hoax

Instead of farmers, it is big boost to insurance corporates; only 3.31% of Rs 21,500 crore, earned as premium, was disbursed to farmers

Prime Minister Fasal Bhima Yojana (PMFBY) of the Government of India is proved to be a big hoax on the farmers. Private insurance companies disbursed only Rs.714.14 crore i.e. 3.31%, as claim settlement, cornering rest 96.69% of the premium income amount of Rs.21,500 crore by the insurance companies.

Even total claims of Rs.4270.55 crore in Kharif in 2016 were below 20% of the total premium income. This was revealed in the minister's reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on 7 April 2017.

In the crop insurance schemes, the premium income is supposed to be collected for a crop period. If the claim did not arise and claim amount did not disburse within the time frame of the particular crop period, then the premium income will become the profit of the insurance company.

The role of government is dubious in this regard. The PM himself had made big claim that the PMFBY would boost the farming sector. Remote sensing technologies and smart phones to reduce delay in claim payment to farmers were assured. The promise was that the claim of 25% of insurance funds of the total compensation for the damaged crop will be disbursed to farmer's bank account directly. All the above claims of the government have been proved wrong and misleading. Finance minister Arun Jaitley was successful in transferring more than double the estimated budget amount of Rs.13700 crore in this account in aid of big insurance companies.

The premium income to the insurance companies in the year 2016-17 in the PMFBY had been 400% more comparing to Rs.5,700 crore during 2015-16 in the earlier crop insurance schemes.

AIKS delegation met the Minister

A AIKS delegation comprising of its general secretary Hannan Mollah, former MP, joint secretary N. K. Shukla and finance secretary P. Krishnaprasad, former MLA met the union minister for agriculture and farmers welfare Radha Mohan Singh in Krishi Bhawan on 15 May submitted a memorandum on PMFBY and held discussion. The minister was unable to give any meaningful explanation.

The AIKS memorandum demanded blacklisting of private insurance companies in the PMFBY which have deceived the farmers by not disbursing the insurance claim; the Government must take policy decision to stop and reverse the privatization of crop insurance sector; to take immediate action for disbursement of the entire claim of the farmers; to make stringent provisions to allow maximum 7% of the amount of premium income collected by corporate insurance companies as service cum business charges and confiscate the remaining amount by the central and respective state governments for using as reserved pool for future disbursement of claims; create a Corpus Fund to start a Farmer's Cooperative Crop Insurance Society as per the Multi State - Multi Purpose Cooperative Societies Act that assures the farmers of adequate protection against crop losses as well as fall in market price of agro produces.

AIKS National Leaders Visited Mandsaur

An AIKS team comprising of its general secretary Hannan Mollah, president Amra Ram, jt. secy. Vijoo Krishnan, finance secretary Krishnaprasad, CPI(M) MP Somaprasad, Rajasthan Kisan Sabha leader Gurcharan Singh Mour and its Madhya Pradesh state president Jaswinder Singh visited Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh and met the families of 2 farmer martyrs who were killed in police firing. AIKS leaders met family

members of Chain Ram Patidar (23 years) at Nayakheda village in Neemuch district and of Abhishek Patidar (17 years) at Barkheda Panth in Mandsaur district and conveyed condolences to them. Both the farmers were small farmers with one owning less than an acre and the other owning about 10 acres jointly with members of the family.

The team met the farmers of the areas and expressed solidarity with their struggle. The farmers explained their situation and said that unprovoked firing was with the intention to kill. Most of the injuries were above the waist, on the chest, head etc. They also explained about the extreme brutalities inflicted on them by the police including on women, the aged and children.

AIKS team found the situation of acute distress in the region as prices of most the crops have crashed and are about 60% below the prices of last year. The demonetization led to this crash and faulty policies like import of wheat and pulses, while there was a good harvest here, further led to fall in prices. Soyabean which fetched Rs.5, 000/ Qtl to Rs.6, 000/Qtl last year is getting only Rs.2, 200 to 2,400/Qtl. Chana which fetched upto Rs.9, 000/Qtl to Rs.10,000/Qtl is getting only Rs.4, 000/Qtl. Similarly best quality wheat is fetching only Rs.1, 200/Qtl which is way below the MSP of Rs.1,625/Qtl. Last year it ranged between Rs.1, 900/Qtl to Rs.2, 000/ Qtl. The government purchased at MSP only for 3 months and not throughout. The import of wheat at zero import duty only added to the woes. Garlic prices fell from Rs.13,000/Qtl to Rs.1000/ Qtl, Methi from Rs.9,000-10,000/Qtl is now ranging between Rs.2,200-3,000/Qtl only.

Post demonetisation traders are paying 2% lesser for cash transactions. In this period input costs have increased manifold. The team also found bags of the best quality of garlic with a farmer unsold because it is not fetching even Rs.10/Kg while the cost of cultivation is around Rs.30/Kg. The BJP Government has not done anything to stabilize prices and assure farmers of remunerative prices.

The state government officials have not visited the families of victims. Local MP, MLA and minister who passed through the area did not even pay a courtesy visit. Heavy police deployment in the entire region and intimidation of farmers with threat of cases was also reported. The farmers reported that police were claiming there were FIRs against 574 people and seeking bribe from them on the pretext of removing their names from the list. It is also reported that the collector has said it is impossible to pay Rs.1 crore compensation to families of the dead announced by the chief minister.

AIKS demanded assured compensation of Rs.1 crore to each of the families of the killed farmers through a cabinet decision; government job to at least one adult member of each family; education expenses of the deceased's children; all cases against the farmers be withdrawn forthwith; and immediate talks to address the genuine demands of the farmers including fixing MSP at 50% above cost of production and comprehensive loan waiver to the peasantry.

Employment – Wage Profile in Maruti Suzuki

- Japanese MNC, Maruti Suzuki expanded its business in India more than Navaratna PSU ONGC;
- 45% of Maruti Suzuki's total production takes place and 65% of its profits come from its Manesar plant in Haryana;
- Its Manesar plant employs 200/300 regular workers with Rs. 15,000 as starting wage;
- the plant employs 500 contract workers with Rs.8,100 as minimum wage;
- the plant further employs 500 apprentices at Rs.4000 as stipend.

(From; Speech of Tapan Sen in Govt. Employees convention)

Joint Meeting of CTUOs

The joint meeting of the central trade union organisations (CTUOs) held in New Delhi on 2 June –

- Noting with serious concern the central government's anti-workers and anti-people policy assaults in rampant violation of labour laws and aggressively pursuing pro-corporate labour laws amendments; attacks on trade union rights; mass scale contractorisation and casualisation of workers; desperate move of privatisation of PSUs in core and strategic sectors of economy and public utilities; drastic cut in expenditure on welfare schemes and denial of minimum wage and social security benefits to scheme workers; reckless entry of 100% FDI and of corporates in strategic sectors like railway, defence, port & dock and coal; non-implementation of 15th ILC recommendation on minimum wage; their adverse impact on the workers and the people's livelihood, increasing unemployment and price rise; and further;
- Noting the suggestions made in the consultation meeting with the major federations of the employees of all sectors, industries and services in their national convention of 30 May, 2017 in New Delhi; and the ongoing sector-wise united struggles and expressing solidarity with these struggles;
- Condemning the central government for not implementing its commitment to the NJCS of central government employees on their wages, allowances and service related issues;
- Decided to hold Workers National Convention on 8 August to decide about future course of workers united actions.

Joint National Convention of Workers

***Date:** 8 August, 2017*

***Time:** 11 AM*

***Venue:** Talkatora Indoor Stadium, New Delhi*

***Organised By:** CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, AICCTU, AIUTUC, TUCC, UTUC, SEWA and LPF;
With National Federations*

Revised Minimum Wage in NCT Delhi

Delhi government re-notified Minimum Wages, as below, after adding due dearness allowances effective from 1 April, 2017. (Refer Working Class, May, 2017)

Category	Rates as on 03.03.2017 Rupees	Dearness Allowance (pm) w.e.f. 01.04.2017 Rupees	Rates from 01.04.2017 (in Rupees)
Un-Skilled	13,350	234.00	13,584
Semi-Skilled	14,698	260.00	14,958
Skilled	16,182	286	16,468

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

State	Centre	Apr. 2016	May 2016	State	Centre	Apr. 2016	May 2016
AP	GUNTUR	270	273	MHR	MUMBAI	283	285
	VIJAYWADA	270	271		NAGPUR	304	306
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	275	274		NASIK	286	287
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	251	256		PUNE	273	273
	GUWAHATI	242	243		SHOLAPUR	287	288
	LABAC SILCHAR	255	255	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	289	294
	MARIANI JORHAT	236	241		ROURKELA	284	289
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	235	240	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	292	295
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	295	292	PUN	AMRITSAR	275	278
CHD	CHANDIGARH	273	275		JALANDHAR	275	276
CHS	BHILAI	304	304		LUDHIANA	273	273
DLI	DELHI	250	251	RJN	AJMER	254	257
GOA	GOA	294	294		BHILWARA	268	271
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	259	259		JAIPUR	262	263
	BHAVNAGAR	258	261	TN	CHENNAI	253	256
	RAJKOT	265	264		COIMBATORE	258	260
	SURAT	250	253		COONOR	275	278
	VADODARA	254	256		MADURAI	269	268
HRY	FARIDABAD	251	252		SALEM	263	263
	YAMUNANAGAR	269	271		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	276	286
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	253	248	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	291	291
J&K	SRINAGAR	254	257		HYDERABAD	241	241
JRK	BOKARO	266	269		WARRANGAL	285	283
	GIRIDIH	294	296	TRP	TRIPURA	248	249
	JAMSHEDPUR	316	319	UP	AGRA	296	297
	JHARIA	298	301		GHAZIABAD	273	271
	KODARMA	311	313		KANPUR	279	283
	RANCHI HATIA	307	307		LUCKNOW	270	271
KNT	BELGAUM	285	284		VARANASI	271	273
	BENGLURU	285	284	WB	ASANSOL	300	300
	HUBLI DHARWAR	295	294		DARJEELING	256	258
	MERCARA	289	295		DURGAPUR	298	299
	MYSORE	289	291		HALDIA	304	307
KRL	ERNAKULAM	279	282		HOWRAH	259	262
	MUNDAKKAYAM	293	298		JALPAIGURI	264	265
	QUILON	322	317		KOLKATA	258	262
MP	BHOPAL	270	269		RANIGANJ	245	248
	CHHINDWARA	277	279		SILIGURI	252	252
	INDORE	251	252				
	JABALPUR	275	275				
ALL INDIA INDEX						275	277

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10th Conference of AIRTWF

(Report page 12)



(From top left) 1. Huge procession; 2. Padmanabhan addressing rally;
3. General Secretary Divakaran placing report

AISGEF & CCCGEW Joint National Convention

(Report page 17)



CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen addressing



Striking NALCO workers against
Central Governments attempt of privatisation

Countrywide Peasants Protest

(Report page 21)



AIKS leaders visited families of farmer-martyrs at Mandsaur



Protest in front of M.P. Bhawan in New Delhi



Protest in Madhya Pradesh

CITU Joining Protest



Odisha



Haryana