



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

The Other Side of Kashmir

May Day in Srinagar



“May Day was born out of struggle and is the only event that transcends all divisions of religion, race, nationality or any other prejudice of the past amongst the human beings,” said CITU state President Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami addressing a day long trade union convention in Srinagar attended large number of workers from different sectors including women.

And the Real Face of Assam



The Huge Rally of Anganwadi Employees in Guwahati

Countrywide May Day Celebration



Agartala, Tripura; Chief Minister Manik Sarkar addressing



Thiruvanthapuram, Kerala



Sangareddy, Telangana



Pampady, Tamilnadu

WORKING CLASS**JUNE 2017****EDITORIAL BOARD****Editor****K. Hemalata****Working Editor****J.S. Majumdar****Members****Tapan Sen****A.K. Padmanabhan****Amitava Guha**

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Coal Workers Strike**Need for Campaign
by all Trade Unions**

All 5 coal federations, including that of BMS, decided 3 days continuous strike on 19-21 June, 2017 in pursuance of 7 point charter of demands. The demands are against Modi government's attack on the coal workers' existing social security benefits; against contractorisation of jobs; against coal mines closures under commercial consideration; for total implementation of last wage agreement and for early settlement of the pending wage agreement. Going on strike, CITU federation has also expressed concern about absence of safety in coal mines as revealed in Rajmahal coal mine disaster in the year ending of 2016.

The unity exhibited by the coal workers, despite Modi government derecognizing INTUC and its coal federation; and BMS' coal federation joining united movement despite BMS keeping itself in isolation from the joint trade union movement; is commendable.

None of the above demands is unjust. Those are mainly to protect the workers' exiting rights and benefits; in defence of the industry as central public sector units; for job protection and employment generation; and in the interest of the country.

Yet, the corporate media, going all out in support of Modi government's aggressive neoliberal agenda including weakening PSUs and attacking on workers' rights and benefits; would dub this strike as sectarian and mislead the people as if this strike is for additional financial benefits and causing 'loss to the nation'.

The coal workers strike is coming in a very crucial time in country's working class and social movement opposing the policies and politics of the ruling dispensation dictated by the international finance capital in conjunction with divisive and diversionary agenda of the communal outfits. This strike will set the tone of coming battles for the entire working class movement going much beyond the organised trade union movement.

It is necessary, therefore, for the entire trade union movement, CITU in particular, to campaign on the issues of the coal workers strike linking with the policies and politics of the central government under prime minister Narendra Modi.

Factories (Amendment) Bill, 2016

Against Existing Workers and Unemployed Youths

Participating in the discussion on the Factories (Amendment) Bill, 2016 in Rajya Sabha on 11 April, 2017, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP opposed the Bill saying that Bill is neither in the interest of the workers nor the vast number of unemployed youths of the country.

The Government had already introduced the Factories (Amendment) Bill, 2014 enhancing the threshold level of employment in order to push out more than 70% factory workforce out of the purview of the Act; increasing permissible limit of overtime from 50 hours to 125 hours per quarter; and increasing spread-over period from 10.5 hours to 12 hours. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour unanimously rejected all these three substantive changes.

"I don't understand when your earlier Bill... is alive ... why another Bill, that is, the Factories (Amendment) Bill, 2016 is here?" Despite the unanimous recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, this Bill is being pushed through. "That is dangerous for our democratic system," Tapan Sen said.

"What is the reality at the workplaces today? Delhi and the adjoining NCR areas like Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Haryana, Gurgaon and Dharuhera 12 hours' work is the order of the day in most of the private factories and 80% of them don't get any extra remuneration. That is the height of illegality. In some places, they do get some remuneration, but not at the required rate, which is double the rate of wages, as per the Factories Act. But you are not addressing that. ... you cannot catch hold of the offenders; you cannot tackle them; so, better legalise the crime that is going on...in your obsession for ensuring 'Ease of Doing Business'", Tapan Sen said.

There is tremendous increase in the productivity of the labour because of the technological development. There is need to reduce the working hours and increase number of shifts and not enhancing overtime, not enhancing the permissible limit of overtime, not taking initiative to legalize the illegality of 12-hours work in the workplace. Government has introduced this Bill when unemployment is increasing putting into serious danger the social fabric of peace and tranquility; and when there is hardly any employment generation.

According to Government's data itself, in 8 most labour-intensive sectors employment generation was only 1.15 lakh in 2015-16; and as per the reply given the labour minister in Rajya Sabha in 4 of these sectors there is net decline of employment in 2016-17. "I have moved certain amendments in the Bill.

CITU Denounced Curtailing of Maternity Benefit

CITU condemned Modi Government for its cabinet decision on 17 May curtailing maternity benefit limiting it to one child in violation of legal provision. While the National Food Security Act 2013 provides '*every pregnant woman and lactating mother*' is entitled to maternity benefit of not less than Rs.6000; Modi government decided limiting the benefit to Rs.5000 to be paid in three installments only '*for the birth of the first live child*'.

Contrary to huge propaganda hype as if Modi government was doing something significant for maternity benefits; it allocated only Rs.2700 crore in 2017 which can cover only 17% of the 2.6 crore live childbirths in a year. The Government is curtailing this limited legal entitlement in a country which has 97% of the women workers in the unorganized sector and accounts for 17% of total maternal deaths in the world and daily 120 maternal deaths. This is in line with Government cutting budget allocations for ICDS, NHM and other schemes to address the problem of maternal and child mortality.

CITU demanded that the Government extend the benefits to all women irrespective of the number of children as provided in Food Security Act and adequate fund allocation for the cash benefit scheme, ICDS and NHM as well as for improving the health delivery system.

Marx in Today's World

Prakash Karat

Polit Bureau Member, CPI(M)

The 200th birth anniversary of Karl Marx falls on May 5, 2018. The observance of the bi-centenary of Marx's birth has begun with his birth anniversary this year.

It may be asked, what is the relevance of a nineteenth century philosopher, Karl Marx, who also wrote a book called *Das Capital*, to the people living in the twenty-first century?

Karl Marx was born 200 years ago and the first volume of *Capital*, a comprehensive study of capitalism, appeared 150 years ago in 1867. So there are grounds to ask why Marx's ideas and works have relevance in the present day world.

To be able to understand the continuing relevance and vitality of Marxist thought let us look back to the year 2008. That year saw a global financial crisis which engulfed the capitalist system the world over. Even after nearly a decade, the global capitalist economy has not fully recovered from this crisis.

This crisis brought out the astonishing contemporaneity of Marx to the bourgeois thinkers and economists. The more perceptive of them were forced to acknowledge the prescience of Marx's analysis of capitalism. A prominent US economist Nouriel Roubini, who is not a Marxist, said at that time "Karl Marx got it right, at some point capitalism can destroy itself." And "We thought markets worked. They are not working."

All the major issues dominating the contemporary period, whether it be the impact of globalization, the unprecedented rise in inequalities and the environmental crisis – all these were foreseen by Marx.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels in 1848, the process of globalization of capitalism was described as "The need of constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere."

Capital, Volume I was published in Marx's life time, the other two volumes were brought out by Engels later. It was the culmination of Marx's theoretical work about the working of the capitalist system – a new mode of production. It laid bare the "inner workings of capitalism", the extraction of surplus value from labour, the accumulation of capital and wealth in the hands of the owners of the means of production, the growing inequality, the crisis of over production and the systemic faults in the capitalist system which lead to recurrent crisis.

The development of capitalism since the days of Marx have not invalidated the theory of dynamics of capitalism spelt out by Marx.

Its further development into the monopoly stage and the globalised finance capital of today can be analysed and understood using the scientific method adopted by Marx. It was using Marx's theoretical approach that Lenin analysed the rise of monopoly capitalism and imperialism in the early years of the 20th century.

Every major current of history, the rise of fascism, the national liberation struggles of the colonies and the establishment of socialism can be grasped from the theory set out by Marx on the historical evolution of society.

Apart from *Capital*, the other major contribution of Marx was historical materialism. Marx's philosophy was based on a combination of dialectics and materialism and it is by the dialectical materialist approach that Marx arrived at a scientific understanding of how human history unfolds.

Marx expounded how the mode of production in society changes to a new mode which leads to a transformation from the old to a new society. After society became divided into classes, it is the class struggle

which has propelled change. As the *Communist Manifesto* stated: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

Marx was not an economist or a political thinker alone. He set out a revolutionary philosophy, a philosophy, the scope of which covers not only politics but the whole of human history, economics, society and nature. But that philosophy which is a combination of the dialectical method with materialism created a powerful combination of theory and practice which can bring about revolutionary transformation.

As Marx himself said "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it."

Karl Marx, along with his collaborator Freidrich Engels, is thus seen as the exponent of the theory of historical materialism and the founder of scientific socialism. It is based on this theory that the revolutionary working class movement was organized from the late nineteenth century.

The role of the working class as the "grave digger" of the capitalist system was spelt out by Marx. The *Communist Manifesto* had called upon the working class to "rise to be the leading class of the nation", which means it must take the leadership of all sections of the people in the revolutionary movement. It was Marx who stated that the struggle to be waged by the working class against capitalism has to be not an "economic" struggle, but a political struggle. This was underlined in the *Manifesto* as "the class struggle is essentially a political struggle".

It was based on this revolutionary perspective of the role of the working class that during Marx's lifetime, the International Working Men's Association, which is called the First International, was founded in 1864.

Karl Marx's political understanding of the working class movement became accepted by working class organizations within two decades of his death. The German Social Democratic Party grew to be a powerful working class party during Engels's lifetime. The work of building a revolutionary organisation of the working class was taken to a higher level by Lenin and the Bolsheviks which resulted in the October Revolution in 1917.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the bourgeois ideologues had declared that Marxism is dead; they had also proclaimed the "end of history." But a quarter of a century later, all this mood of bourgeois triumphalism has vanished.

Economists and experts of various hues have expressed anxiety about the high levels of inequality which is plaguing all the advanced capitalist countries. The inequalities of income and wealth in the advanced capitalist countries are at the highest levels in the past seventy years. In terms of income inequality, the French economist Thomas Piketty has noted that the level of inequality in the United States is "probably higher than in any other society at any time in the past, anywhere in the world."

At the global level, the top one per cent of adults own 51 per cent of the world's wealth. This is what globalised finance capitalism has produced.

Karl Marx would not have been surprised at this dire state of affairs affecting the world today. He had given the working class and the other working people the scientific theory which could be the guide to action on how to transcend capitalism and build a new socialist society free from class exploitation and social oppression.

We are currently observing the year-long centenary celebrations of the October Socialist Revolution. In September this year, falls the 150th anniversary of the publication of Marx's *Das Kapital*. Following that will be the 200th birth anniversary of Karl Marx.

All these occasions should be utilized to sharpen and deepen our understanding of Marxism-Leninism and to set out a map for socialism in India in the 21st century.

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

MNREGA

Resist Central Government's Attack on MNREGA

Kashmir Singh Thakur

CITU National Secretary

Left parties, CITU, Kisan Sabha, youths and students organisations have been pursuing for long to make 'Right to Work' as a Constitutional provision by campaigning through meetings, conventions, seminars and organising agitation to unite and make people conscious of the issue.

CITU organised a national convention on Right to Work on 2-4 April 1990 at Durgapur in West Bengal. Again CITU held a national convention on Right to Work in Kolkata in 2005.

As a result of the movement, when V. P. Singh government at the Centre brought proposal for the Right to Work in 1989, his government fell as BJP withdrew support on this issue. But, workers, peasants and other organisations and Left parties continued their campaign and movement for Right to Work.

A new political situation developed in country when BJP government was removed from power at the centre in 2004 and Congress-led minority government at the Centre had to take support from the Left parties on the basis of common minimum programme which included the Right to Work. Under pressure from the Left parties, for the first time in the country, Central Government incorporated the agenda of Right to Work.

On 19 October 2004, in the Constitution Club in New Delhi a national seminar was organised on Employment Guarantee and Right to Work in which country's leading Left leaders, intellectuals and leaders of workers, peasants and of other mass organisations participated. This seminar gave proposal to Central Government in writing for enactment of an employment guarantee law.

Following this, the Central government introduced National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill in both Houses of the Parliament and it became an Act named as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA). Because of long drawn struggle by Left parties, workers, peasants and others mass organisations and intellectuals, crores of rural poor of the country got legal guarantee of 100 days work in a year under this Act. At that time also, at policy level, by corporate media and finance and some other ministries opposed this employment guarantee Act.

On 2 February, 2006 this Act was enforced in 200 districts of the country. The Act has the provision of entire funding by the Central government for this job guarantee; and unemployment allowances by the state governments. MNREGA gives guarantee that every applicant for job, above 18 years of age, shall get 100 days work in a year. 100 days work is his/her legal right, not gratis. In the huge unemployment situation in the country 100 days work is insufficient. Yet, in rural India there was some job creation and needy persons have legal guarantee of work.

Panchayat level authorities have to provide jobs within 15 days after application. Against application in form 4, the applicant is entitled to a receipt as a proof. If the job is not provided within 15 days, the applicant can apply for and will be given unemployment allowance @ 1/4th in the first month, 1/2 in the second and third months of the minimum wage as declared by the Central government.

Work under MNREGA include water conservation; draught control; irrigation related work; land reform; cleaning of ponds and regeneration of traditional water bodies; land development; flood control; agriculture and horticulture related work; road construction; drainage etc.

Due to MNREGA there are development in villages and needy families are to get 100 days work. At most of the places, mostly women are engaged in MNREGA work. It is a step forward for women's economic self-reliance and in poverty eradication. Recently, the World Bank submitted a economic development report to Himachal Pradesh government in which it is stated due to MNREGA there was job creation in rural areas which helped in poverty elevation and women's economic situation improved in particular. There was much improvement in health and education. There are 11.85 lakh of job card holders in Himachal Pradesh in which 62.59 per cent are women, 27 per cent are of scheduled caste and 6.56 per cent are of scheduled tribes.

As soon as BJP coalition government came to power at the Centre in 2014, it resorted to cut in budget allocation for MNREGA and issued directive to all state governments to cut in budget for MNREGA. Some arguments are advanced for these budgetary cuts. But their main intention is to reduce budget and transfer all rural work to the contractors. Under Narendra Modi's leadership the real intention has been made clear that is to snatch work from the rural poor and transfer all rural work to the contractors.

In MNREGA, funding for material component and labour component are not being paid to states for 6 months and more and MNREGA related all work remain paralyzed. During this period, cement and other building material costs and wage rates also increased; but, there is virtually no increase in the budgetary allocation for this. Proportionate to the rise of building material costs and wage rates, the current budgetary allocation for MNREGA should have been Rs.65,000 crore. But, there is meagre increase in the budget – from Rs.47,604 crore in 2016-17 to Rs.48,000 crore in 2017-18.

MNREGA is the only source of earning for lakhs of rural workers and through it village development also takes place. Through this there is rise in the standard of living for the rural workers, women in particular. On 12 July, 2013 by Central government's notification, all MNREGA workers who completed 50 days in a year were brought under Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Act. By this the MNREGA workers were entitled for financial benefits for children's education, marriage, medical facilities, house repairing and on attaining 60 years of age benefits of pension from the Welfare Board. But, BJP's Narendra Modi government has withdrawn these by another notification on 10 February, 2017. It means that crores of MNREGA workers are deprived of children's education, medical, marriage, pension and other benefits. Crores of MNREGA workers social security benefits ended.

Modi government claims to the workers friendly. But, Modi government weakened MNREGA and made it non-functional; and deprived the MNREGA workers of their existing benefits. Against this there is need of building people's movement led by CITU. What Modi government says and does are totally contradictory. First, it weakened the MNREGA Act and now it snatched away workers social security.

CITU state and district committees should give attention in mobilizing MNREGA workers to submit form 4 to panchayats secretaries; on not getting job, apply for unemployment allowance and for building movement against BJP government removing them out of Construction Workers Welfare Board. .

Coal

Coal Workers 3 Days Strike in June

About 3 lakh permanent and 2.5 lakh contract workers of Coal India Ltd (CIL) and in all its subsidiaries, spread over in several states in India; and about 60,000 permanent and 50,000 contract workers of Central and Telangana state governments joint venture Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL) in the four districts of Telangana will be resorting to 3 days continuous strike on 19-21 June in pursuance of 7 point charter of demands submitted to the chairmen of both the coal PSUs and the secretary of the Ministry of Coal of the Government of India on 9 May jointly by all five coal workers federations of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and also of BMS.

The subsidiaries of CIL are Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) in West Bengal and Jharkhand; Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) in Jharkhand; Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) in Jharkhand; South-Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh; Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh; Northern Coalfield Limited (NCL) in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh; Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) in Odisha; North Eastern Coalfields Ltd in Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh; and Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Limited (CMPDIL) which supports all the production subsidiaries.

The 7 demands include (i) stopping proposed merger of CMPF with EPF; (ii) continuation of CMPF-based pensions to retired employees; (iii) total implementation of last wage agreement – NCWA IX; (iv) early negotiation and settlement of pending wage agreement – NCWA X; (v) stoppage of contractorisation of perennial jobs and equal wage for equal work; (vi) stoppage of ceiling/restriction on overtime payment and restoration of double wages as per law; (vii) immediate withdrawal of decision to closure of coal mines. The urgent concern of the workers is Modi government's proposed merger of Coal Mines Provident Fund (CMPF) with Employees Provident Fund (EPF). CMPF is more beneficial than EPF.

Coal workers strike is also crucial in the backdrop of Modi government's massive disinvestment and privatisation drive of PSUs.

The last joint coal workers strike was on 6-7 January, 2015. On 17 December 2014, all 5 coal workers federations jointly served 5 days strike notice against privatisation and disinvestment of CIL through Coal Ordinance and Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Bill, 2015. Coal workers responded magnificently through massive strike which began on 6 January, 2015. However, after 2 days strike, except CITU, all other coal federations called off the strike. Immediately, thereafter, on 30 January 2015 Government sold further 10% shares of CIL reducing Government's share holding from 79.65% to 69.65%. Through this sale Government earned Rs.22557.63 crore from the market CIL being a Maharatna company and many of its subsidiaries are Miniratna companies. Same year, on 18 November 2015, Modi Government approved further 10% stake sale of CIL. The issue is hanging fire since then.

Why CMPF is being merged with EPF

R. P. Singh, Vice President, AICWF

By Coal Mines (Special Provision) Act, 2015, Modi government permitted private companies to sell coal in the open market. Earlier, coal mines were allotted to private companies for captive consumption only.

Under Coal Mines Provident Fund Act 1948, (CMPF) all workers in coal mines, irrespective of their being in public or private sectors, are compulsorily to be made members of CMPF. CMPF is more beneficial to coal workers than EPF and, further, the employer's contribution is more in CMPF than in EPF.

As the private companies are increasingly coming in coal mining and open market sale; there is demand from them to Modi government to remove this more-beneficial-to-the-workers and more-burdensome-to-the-employers in this social security scheme in CMPF. This is one major reason for the Modi government's proposed merger of CMPF in EPF.

For the purpose of 12% provident fund deduction in both CMPF and EPF, the maximum gross pay in EPF is limited to Rs.15000; whereas there is no limitation of gross salary in CMPF. Under EPF, maximum deduction from workers pay is 12% of Rs.15000; that is Rs.1800 (with provision of more voluntary contribution by the worker); but, employers contribution remains limited to Rs.1800. Under CMPF it is compulsory 12% contribution on total gross pay for both, the employee and the employer. Merger of CMPF to EPF means less PF contribution by the coal employees and employers and huge drop in retirement benefits.

Under EPF, out of this maximum Rs.1800 of employer's contribution, only 3.67% that is Rs.550.50

(rounded up Rs.551) goes to PF account and the rest 8.33% that is Rs.1249.50 (rounded up Rs.1250) goes to pension fund. Under EPF, the pension is also decided on the basis of maximum gross pay of Rs.15000. 50% of the maximum gross salary as maximum pension is Rs.7500 on completion of 30 years of service. Under EPF the pensionable service is being calculated from 1995. Up to 2017, it is only 22 years. That means upto 2017 one is entitled to proportionate maximum pension of Rs. 4714.

The comparative chart given below will show the huge loss to coal workers in case of CMPF merger with EPF presuming the worker / employee / officer gets gross pay of Rs.60,000 as an example.

Monthly Contribution (in Rs.)	CMPF	EPF	Remarks
Worker's	7200	1800	With Special permission upto Rs.7200
Employer's	7200	1800	Limited to Rs.1800
Total Deposit	14400	3600	
Transferring to pension fund	334	1250	Monthly pension under CMPF – Rs. 15000; Monthly pension under EPF in 2017 – Rs 5500
Monthly deposit in PF	14066	2350	

In the example given above, it means, under EPF, in the worker's PF account there will be less deposit of Rs.11716 per month. Even if a worker with permission contributes 12% of his total salary in PF fund, then also there will be Rs.6316 less deposit per month. By these, each worker will lose lakhs of rupees in provident fund and the employer will gain hundreds of crores of rupees.

Even the contract workers in outsourced company will be affected by this decision of Modi government as trade unions are pursuing their inclusion in CMPF and some of the companies have included the contract workers in CMPF.

Behind this move there are two clear intentions (i) that Modi government is going for large scale privatisation of coal industry and (ii) that huge concessions are being given to the corporates at the cost of workers' future.

All coal federations in the country jointly served notice for 3 days strike on 19-21 June, 2017 against this decision of the Government. In Goebbel style, the union coal minister Piyush Goyal said that merger of CMPF to EPF is beneficial to the coal workers! A rumour is being spread that there may be agreement with the unions if Government takes decision to apply EPF only to future employees. This is to deliberately weaken the incoming coal workers strike. This not only would affect the future employees, but also affect present employees as because the pension is paid from accumulated pension fund in which there is continuous contribution. This is a chian system which must not break.

It may be recalled that after discussion in the subcommittee of JBCCI, the management and the unions held discussion with the PF Commissioner and an understanding was reached that workers and the management would contribute 7% each towards pension fund, by which the pension would become so strong that current rate of pension can be continued. It was also considered that as pension fund under CMPF would become stronger, there may be increase in pension amount also. As far as workers are concerned, they are already contributing 5.67% of PF contribution towards pension fund. To make it 7% they have to contribute

only 1.33% more. This was a significant decision for the future of the coal workers. Now, Government is trying to stop this unanimous decision.

The Government is bent on destroying the CIL so that corporates can monopolise this energy sector. In a planned move Modi government is taking away all funds from CIL. CIL had Rs.62636 crore as reserve and surplus fund upto March, 2013. This fund was necessary for development and for new projects of CIL. But, Coal India was forced to declare high dividend to the government coffer amounting to Rs.19574 crores. Paying more dividend than the profit is suicidal for any enterprise is the opinion of the former chairman of CIL Partha Bhattacharya and other economists. Following this, the Government forced CIL subsidiaries like CCL, WCL, MCL and NCL to buyback CIL shares so that Coal India can pay another Rs.15000 crore as dividend to the government including the tax. But, subsidiaries were forced to buy back more than the targeted shares like NCL was forced to buy back 23.14% shares as against 4.29% target; MCL 24.33% in place of 2.29%, SECL 16.93% in place of 4.18%; CCL is being forced to buy back Rs.1001.88 crore of shares. It is reported that for this CCL's financial condition steeply deteriorated and it had to take Rs.500 crore loan from MCL.

Port & Dock

Cochin Shipyard Workers' Strike Against Attempt of Privatisation

6000 plus permanent, contract and casual workers of Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) in Kerala were on total strike from 5 a.m. till midnight on 28 March led by Cochin Shipyard Joint Action Front (CSJAF), the joint platform of all trade unions in CSL including CITU, INTUC, AITUC and CSEU. BMS did not join the strike convention, but served strike notice separately.

The strike was the culmination of series of resistant agitation by the workers with their families including 143 days continuous dharna and other mass protests. Pre-strike convention was attended by leaders of political parties, social and cultural activists and different youth organisations.

Officers and supervisors organisations did not join the strike and remained inside. The management sought help of the navy to evacuate some of the employees. Others had to remain 36 hours in the shipyard.

The workers' strike in CSL was against Modi government's attempt to privatise CSL through backdoor. On 18 November, 2015 the cabinet committee on economic affairs decided to disinvest 10 per cent shares of CSL and also to generate 15 per cent new shares of CSL in the form of Initial Public Offer (IPO) thus making 25 per cent private share of CSL as step for privatisation of CSL. All in the name of mobilizing fund for development and diversification of CSL which is a profit making shipyard.

Road Transport

After successful and massive strikes of road transport workers in Haryana followed in Bihar (*Working Class.....*); road transport workers of Assam and Tamilnadu also resorted to strike. Following are reports.

Assam

Complete Road Transport Strike

In a massive voice of protest against Modi government's retrograde Motor Transport Act and Safety Bill, workers of entire road transport sector went on 24 hours statewide strike on 25 April paralysing the public



Always busy Jhalukbari flyover was deserted on strike day

transportation system in the entire state. In Guwahati city it was mixed response with private city buses remaining completely off the road.

The strike call was given by four unions – Assam state unit of All India Road Transport Workers Federation, All Assam Motor Workers Federation, Motor Workers Joint Forum and the Petroleum Mazdoor Union.

Tamilnadu

State Road Transport Workers' Complete Strike

Tamilnadu state road transport corporation workers resorted to complete statewide strike 15-16 May.

Road transport workers unions of CITU, AITUC, LPF, HMS and of other trade unions jointly submitted memorandum containing the demands to the management and the state government. As the government and management failed to respond, the unions served strike notice in February, 2017. Even after strike notice, the management and government did not respond. As such the unions announced to go on indefinite strike from 15 May. But, workers resorted to strike from 14 May evening itself.

The strike demands included immediate payment of all dues to retired employees; depositing all deducted amounts from the workers to the respective authorities; immediate negotiation and settlement of 13th wage agreement due since September 2016; wages and service conditions at par with those of the workers of other PSUs of the state; and allocation of fund by the government to the road transport corporation to meet its budgetary deficit.

The strike was unprecedented and total throughout the state with 22,000 buses stationed in depots. Even the workers belonging to the ruling party's union also participated in the strike.

The government was forced to hold urgent negotiation with the unions and announcing Rs.1250 crore funding to meet the dues of the already retired employees and in writing, further, assured to discuss and settle with the unions other demands within next 3 months following which the strike was called off.

Tamilnadu road transport corporation has been incurring daily losses of about Rs.5 crore due its social obligations as decided by the government. The corporation is plying 12000 busses in non-viable routes. It provides free passes to the school going children to the tune of Rs.200 crore value annually for which government is not compensating.

The corporation has been keeping unpaid retirement benefits dues to the retired workers for last 7 years amounting to Rs.1700 crore. The corporations also failed to deposit about Rs.4500 crore from the

deducted amount from the employees on account of PF, gratuity, credit society, LIC premium and other social security benefit schemes. Both together comes to around Rs.7,000 crore.

Wage level of the transport worker is also less than those in other state PSUs like electricity board , municipal corporation, civil supplies etc. All these accumulated in huge anger among the workers which was reflected in the total strike on 14-15 May. (Inputs: K.C.Gopikumar)

Banking

Bank Employees Protest against RBI Governors



Protest in Kolkata

State units of Bank Employees Federation of India (BEFI) staged demonstration in front of RBI offices in the first week of May to protest against the speeches of the governor of RBI in an overseas university as also its deputy governor in a meeting of FICCI advocating privatisation and mergers of public sector banks (PSBs); slashing down the present workforce through VRS and bringing in new entrants with background of corporate culture. They were conveying the Modi government's policy.

Both of them lack experience of working in public sector institutions and understanding of their social responsibility. They see privatisation and mergers are the panacea for all problems of the PSBs. They want to ignore the fact that main problem of the PSBs is the huge accumulation of bad loans due to unholy nexus of corporate houses, corrupt politicians and a section of top executives of PSBs.

The speeches of the governor and deputy governor of RBI reflects their allegiance to big corporate houses and are unbecoming to head such autonomous institution as was demonstrated during demonetisation.

The bank employees of the country have been unitedly resisting such attempts through struggles during more than two and half decades against the policy of privatisation of PSBs and will continue with renewed vigour and wider public support against such attempts in future to dismantle the PSBs.

(Inputs: Pradip Biswas)

Railways

Railwaymen on Agitation

On 13 April, Gomoh Branch of All India Loco Running Staff Association (LRSA) held its 21st biennial conference. An impressive railway men's public meeting was joined by large number of loco railwaymen from Adra and Ranchi of SE Railway and from Mugalsarai, Danapur, Asansol, Andal of Eastern Railway including large number of youths.

Addressing the meeting LRSA general secretary M. N. Prasad said about the increasing attack on the rights and livelihood of the workers and privatisation drive by Modi government. He explained the immediate agitational programme of LRSA including 36 hours dharna in every railway division on 25-26 April.

The conference elected Pankaj Kumar as branch secretary; J. K. Singh as working president and Prabhakar Kumar as treasurer. *(Inputs: Prabhulal)*

What and How Railway is being Privatized

Ongoing Activities

Railway design, financing, construction, maintenance including production activities have been outsourced or privatized. Some of these are briefly narrated below.

- Production of wagon for railways, except in certain workshops, has been completely privatized. Many activities in the coach and engine production units have been opened for outsourcing. Fitting of central buffer coupling and bio-toilets have been privatized which are carried out within the workshops' production units, maintenance sheds and yards. Power cars in Shatabdi and Rajdhani expresses have been outsourced and are operated in running trains by private staff.
- FDI has been allowed and two production units have been approved - an electric engine factory at Madhepura in Bihar has been given to multinational company Alstom and another diesel engine factory at Marhora has been given to another MNC General Electric Company.
- Entire construction activities like laying of railroads, construction of buildings have been outsourced. Laying of signal and telecommunication equipments along with their maintenance have been outsourced.
- Cleaning, washing, sanitation of stations and coaches; exterior and interior washing of coaches and onboard cleaning in running trains; cleaning activities of engines in sheds; onboard house keeping including providing linen have been outsourced. Watering of coaches has been outsourced.
- Lot of activities in sheds, workshops, yards, and production units have been outsourced.. This includes both production and maintenance.
- Many private ticket counters for both reserved and unreserved tickets have been opened. In E class stations the counter clerk is on contract.
- Entire catering activities have been privatized through IRCTC, both onboard and stationary units.
- Eight lines connecting private ports and industrial estates have been privatized through PPP route. More such lines are being added. Operation of trains in these PPP routes is with Indian railways.

- Container trains are run by Container Corporation of railways, the shares of which have been disinvested to about 37%. Lalu Prasad as railway minister allowed 15 private container operators to run container trains along with railways' container trains, the operation of which rests with railways. Now Indian railways has decided to allow private goods trains on the same pattern of container private trains the operation of which will be with railways. Now cabinet has approved disinvestment of certain railway public sector units under the railway ministry such as IRCTC, IRFC and IRCON.
- In railway hospitals doctors and para medical workers have been appointed on contract basis. Entire building maintenance including railway quarters has been outsourced.
In the above activities, more than 7 lakh private workers are working. They are not being paid even government's minimum wages. No labour law exists for them. No proper organization is available for them. *(From: the Note of DRMU)*

Recent Qualitative Privatisation

In implementing Vivek Debroy Committee recommendations, the Central Government has taken following decisions.

- Railway budget has been made part of general budget to pave easy way for qualitative privatization.
- On 5 April, 2017 cabinet decided to appoint Railway Development Authority (RDA) by an executive order without amending the Railway Act.
- RDA will allow access to private train operators in both passenger and goods segments to run trains in the existing tracks. Operation of trains will go to private. They will be provided level playing field, meaning the prime time trains will be shared with them. Many of the present trains may go to private.
- RDA will decide the fare and freight charges on cost basis. At present the passenger fare is charged at 53 per cent of the cost. Therefore, the fare will go up by 47 per cent. Fares will be more in private trains.
- Private operators will be allowed access to use railway facilities in yards, sheds and workshops for maintenance of their coaches, wagons and engines.
- There will be private companies' drivers, guards, ticket examiners apart from other category staff on lower wages.
- The RDA will come into force before August 31, 2017.

PPP of 23 Stations

- There are 7,600 railways stations in India. Stations have been categorized on the basis of their annual earnings categorizing A1 stations earnings of Rs.60 crore and above; A stations Rs.8 crore and above; B stations on Rs.4 and above; all suburban stations are C class stations; Rs.60 lakh and above for D class and less than Rs.60 lakh as E class stations. F class stations are only halts where contractors sell tickets. 75 stations are categorized as A1 and 332 as A stations.
- Railway ministry has decided to appoint Station Facilitation Managers (SFMs) as a contractor for stations development, redevelopment and commercial development in the name of converting A1 and A stations as world class stations. To start with, they have called tender applications for 23 stations now.
- Only railway operational activities like train operations, parcel and ticketing including platform ticketing, passenger and goods movement, over head traction, signal and telecommunication, track works etc will remain with the railways. Rest with SMFs. All existing railway staff in other activities will have to be transferred out of stations. SFMs private staff will take over.

- SFM shall ensure that adequate manpower – working (staff) and supervisory level are available to carry out all services. The manpower shall be provided with uniforms & identity cards.
- SFM has to pay lease premium to railways. Lease period will be 45 years. it can use even air space. It will collect license fees from commercial users.

Railway Development Authority and Station Facilitation Managers are the two major privatisation drive which will change the entire contour of railways shortly.

23 Stations Privatisation,

(Tender called: with estimated investment; and date of opening tender)

Railway	Division	Station	Investment (Rs cr.)	Last date of opening tender
Central	Mumbai	Lokmanyatilak	250	12-6-2017
		Thane	200	12-6-2017
	Pune	Pune	200	12-6-2017
East Coast	Waltair	Vishakapatnam	200	24-5-2017
Eastern	Howrah	Howrah	400	23-5-2017
North Central	Allahabad	Allahabad	150	30-6-2017
		Kanpur Central	200	30-6-2017
North Western	Ajmer	Udaipur City	100	11-5-2017
North East Frontier	Lumding	Kamakhya	228	24-5-2017
Northern	Firozpur	Jammu Tawi	75	17-5-2017
	Delhi	Faridhabad	70	17-5-2017
South Central	Vijayawada	Vijayawada	94	24-5-2017
	Secunderabad	Secunderabad	282	24-5-2017
South Eastern	Ranchi	Ranchi	100	25-5-2017
South Western	Bangalore	Bangalore Cant	80	1-6-2017
		Yashvantpur	100	1-6-2017
Southern	Chennai	Chennai Central	350	22-5-2017
	Palghat	Calicut	75	22-5-2017
West Central	Bhopal	Bhopal	75	18-5-2017
Western	Ratlam	Indore	75	18-5-2017
		Mumbai Central	250	6-6-2017
		Bandra Terminus	200	6-6-2017
		Borivile	280	6-6-2017

(From: DREU Note)

Rising Prices; Falling Industrial Output

The data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on 12 April, 2017 shows that the consumers' price index rose faster by 3.8% in March, 2017.

Separate data shows that there is contraction in Industrial output. Industrial output was 2.6% in April-February, 2015-16 which dropped to just 0.4% in April-February 2016-17. *(TOI; 13 April, 2017)*

STATES

Bihar

Joint Trade Union Convention

A joint trade union convention on '*Recent Situation of the Working Class and Our Tasks*' was held at local Ministerial Club in Gaya on 30 April, joined 93 leading functionaries from 13 trade unions and associations of workers and employees of bank, electricity, state government, health, medical and sales, Asha, Anganwadi, pensioners, contract workers and lawyers. Their leaders Shyamlal, P.N. Singh, Arjun Prasad, Jiyalal, Jaywardhan Kumar and S. Ahmed addressed the convention.

The convention adopted a resolution, moved by Abir Adhikari of BSSR Union and seconded by Shyamlal and P.N. Singh, condemning the aggressive neoliberal economic policy being pursued by Modi government causing increased jobloss, rising poverty, disinvestment and dismantling of public sector against country's self-reliance; and noting BJP government sponsored groups destabilizing social harmony and creating communal polarization. The resolution condemned government's anti-workers labour laws amendments in favor of employers.

The convention took task to mobilize maximum number of workers against these onslaughts and create waves of movement against these anti-workers and anti-people policies and for social harmony.

Massive Joint Demonstration by Anganwadi Employees

About 7000 Anganwadi employees belonging to Bihar Rajya Anganwadi Sevika-Sahayika Sangh of CITU and Anganwadi Sevika-Sahayika Karamachari Union of AITUC jointly staged a day long state level demonstration in front of the chief minister of Bihar in Patna and held public meetings at Gardanibagh *Dharna Sthal* presided over by Soni Kumari and Chandravati Devi and which was addressed by national vice president of AIDWA Rampari, national joint secretary of state government employees federation Manjul Kumar Das, Rajkishore Roy, Anganwadi CITU union's general secretary Sobha Kumari, chief patron Usuf and others; Anganwadi AITUC union's general secretary Kumar Bindeshwar and national president Usha Sahni; and both unions district leaders. The speakers told about their deprivation and exploitation by both the central and state governments; paltry wages; corruption and commission system by the officials depriving the mother and child from nourishing food; privatisation by corporate NGOs; increasing workload by the state government etc.

A delegation met the deputy secretary and submitted an 18 point charter of demands mainly demanding Rs.18000 as minimum wage, equal pay for equal work, regularisation of wage payments and supply of food items in ICDS.

This demonstration was the culmination of 40 days continuing indefinite strike by AITUC union; and by CITU union demonstration on 8 April in blocks and on 20 April in districts and submitting memoranda to the district administration.

Odisha

Agitation against NALCO's Disinvestment

CITU Bhubaneswar local committee staged protest demonstration in front of NALCO corporate office in Bhubaneswar on 25 April against Central government's decision to disinvest 10% share of NALCO, a profit making Navaratna public sector enterprise. The government's move is to earn Rs.1204 crore through

disinvestment against the interests of workers and employees of NALCO, thousands of people directly or directly dependent on NALCO mines and factories and the interest of the nation. CITU leaders Sivaji Pattnaik, former MP, Janardan Pati, Nabakishore Mohanty, Dusmant Das, Satyananda Behera, Ramesh Jena, Suresh Routray and AIDWA state president Puspa Das and others addressed the gate meeting.

Employees and workers of NALCO Smelter and CPP Complex, Angul under the banner of NALCO Unions Coordination Committee staged dharna at E.D. office on 19 April wearing black badge. Similarly, at Damanjodi MR Complex, workers are on path of struggle. State CTUs are planning joint movement.

Construction Workers Joint Demonstration

Thousands of construction workers jointly staged demonstration before the office of the labour commissioner cum member-secretary of Odisha Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board on 24 April.

Construction workers unions of HMS, INTUC, AITUC, CITU, BMS, AICCTU, AIUTUC and other independent unions formed a joint platform as Co-ordination Committee of Nirman Sramik Unions in the state to pursue construction workers demands.

The demands include early registration of construction workers, Rs.500 as pension, house building assistance, students' scholarship, marriage assistance, infrastructural development in labour offices for early disposal of the benefits; proper functioning of the Board and utilization of the fund.

A 14 point charter of demand was submitted to the labour secretary, Odisha. A trade unions delegation discussed the demands. The secretary assured to look into the matter within a month. (Inputs: Ramesh Jena)

Rajasthan

Brick Kiln Workers 'Mazdoor Bhavan' Inaugurated



CITU national president K. Hemalata inaugurated Rajasthan's biggest brick kiln workers union's - 'Int Bhatta Labour Union (CITU) – central building *Mazdoor Bhavan* at Shri Ganganagar on 23 April by hoisting CITU flag, paying floral tributes to the martyrs and then unveiling the building plaque in presence of thousands of workers and national, state, district and different unions' leaders of CITU.

It was 6 years effort completing the construction of this building facing difficulties due to recession in the brick kiln industry since 2014 and closure of 40 per cent of the brick kilns. Union's president Mohanlal presided over the ceremony.

On this occasion, an impressive meeting was held next to the building premises presided over by the CITU state president Ravidra Shukla. The leaders were introduced by the CITU state general secretary B. S. Rana. Addressing the meeting Hemalata said that the Mazdoor Bhavan, which was inaugurated by her, firstly

shall become the centre for realization of basic rights and relief from exploitation of brick kiln workers in the state; shall become centre for developing political consciousness of the workers and shall become the centre to give new direction of workers movement in the district.

In brick kilns along with men workers, large number of women are also working who have to take additional responsibility as home worker for preparation of food, nursing the children and other house scores. Hemalata said that in Rajasthan there are about 3 lakh women scheme workers. Though the chief minister is a woman, yet these workers are severely exploited and are being paid paltry sums as remuneration. She drew attention to anti-workers labour laws amendments beginning in Rajasthan. Such district centres should be created in all other districts also to build working class unity to give a befitting reply to such governments which trample the labour rights.

Addressing the meeting CITU vice president J. S. Majumdar had drawn the attention towards planned spread of communal and caste divisive agenda to divert attention from the workers and people's burning issues; attacks on peasants lands; looting of bank in the name loans to corporates. Mazdoor Bhavan should become centre to fight against these issues along with other sections of the people. The meeting was also addressed by the former state president of CITU Hetram Beniwal, CITU state secretary Bhanwar Singh Shekhawat and other CITU state leaders; several state and local unions leaders; several leaders from neighbouring Hanumangarh district; and state president Ravindra Shukla.

Tamilnadu

Hospital Workers Strike

Workers of Meenakshi Medical College Hospital (Kancheepuram) including hospital staff resorted to indefinite strike for wages increase, regularization of jobs and for other demands. The management suspended eight office bearers who were leading the movement. Through public notification, management asked the workers to join duties before 5 May failing which management threatened them with mass dismissal. CITU raised the issue with the ALC, IMC and the district authorities. The ALC advised the management to revoke suspension and hold negotiations with CITU. Management conceded to the advice and the workers resumed duties on 4 May.

Telangana

CITU's Historic Mahajana Padayatra

Pursuing workers and people's basic issues, CITU Telangana state committee organised historic 5 month long *Mahajana Padayatra* overcoming all obstacles created by the state government. In this programme, 2 lakh handbills and 1 lakh badges were distributed among about 5.69 lakh of workers in about 40 sectors; 25,596 workers directly joined the Padayatra and more than 84,500 workers joined public meetings.

In preparatory campaign 241 round table meetings were held in 25 districts. Fund was collected from the workers and employees. Only middle class employees contributed Rs.6 lakh.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Against Communalism

***'Gau Rakshaks'* kill Dairy Farmer in Rajasthan**

On 8 April, a CPI(M) delegation with its Polit Bureau member and former MP Subhashini Ali; CITU Tripura state general secretary Shankar Prasad Dutta, MP; Badrudduja Khan, MP from West Bengal; All India Kisan Sabha president and CPI(M) Rajasthan state secretary Amra Ram with other Party members from the state - Sumitra Chopra, Raeesa and Guru Charan Singh Mor - visited Behror in the Alwar district of Rajasthan where so called *gau rakshaks* attacked on 1 April the dairy farmers of Haryana and brutally killed one of them, Pahlu Khan.

The delegation met the officials in the local police station. The DSP and investigating officer told the delegation that earlier on the same day, some persons in four vans carrying cattle in Delhi – Jaipur highway were arrested and brought to the police station. They are still in custody. The DSP alleged that they had no purchase document of the cattle. This was a false statement as the receipts copies of the cattle purchase were reproduced in the print media.

Later, two more vans with cattle were stopped at the same place by a mob and the occupants were severely beaten. He claimed that the police actually chased away the mob and took the injured persons to hospital. While others were released from the hospital next day, Pahlu Khan died on 3 April. FIRs were filed against the 6 named and 'others' attackers including sec.302 after Pahlu Khan's death. However, none of the 6 named attackers is arrested.

The delegation then met the district collector at Alwar. He admitted that what happened was very wrong and the dairy farmers actually had cattle purchase receipts in their possession.

After investigation, the CPI(M) delegation demanded that administration should secure cattle purchase details of the concerned dairy farmers from the Jaipur Haatvada, organized by the Jaipur municipal corporation, as these receipts certainly contain names and addresses of the purchasers. As the police is insisting that without requisite permission transporting cattle to another state is illegal, in that case the Jaipur municipal corporation authorities are explainable and must have issued requisite permission for transport to the purchasers.

The delegation also demanded that (i) all attackers be arrested, murder cases against them be filed and are pursued expeditiously for exemplary punishment; provide adequate compensation and rehabilitation of Pahlu Khan's family; other victim injured persons be released, compensation paid and their livestock be returned and hospital authorities return all their possessions lying with them; "Hindu Chaukis" on the way be removed; take strong and effective measures against the vigilante groups and punishment to those who participate and support vigilantism.

AIKS' Contribution to Alwar Victims

AIKS collected donation from all over the country and on 24 May decided to contribute from this collection Rs. 10 Lakh to the family of Pahlu Khan, who was killed, and Rs. 4 Lakh to Rafeeq, who was injured, as relief to the victims of vigilante group's attack in Alwar district of Rajasthan on 1 April.

AIKS-led Communal Amity Meetings

All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) organised *communal amity meetings* on 30 April in different parts of the country joined by AIAWU, CITU, AIDWA, SFI, DYFI and other mass organisations taking pledge to work for communal harmony to defeat the design of communal polarisation by the communal forces. Relief fund for Pahlu Khan's family was also collected from different areas.

Communal amity meeting was also organised in Pahlu Khan's village in Jaisingpur of Nuh district of Haryana attended by hundreds of peasants and other democratic sections. Pahlu Khan was a poor dairy farmer who was killed by Hindutva extremists. AIKS demanded compensation and government's job to one family member of Pahlu Khan. Government did not offer any help to Pahlu Khan's family so far. AIKS also published a booklet for this campaign.



Meeting at Nuh

CITU in AIKS' communal amity meetings

Quickly responding to AIKS-led programme of communal amity meetings; CITU stated that AIKS had initiated appreciable steps in projecting cow protection as a class issue of the peasantry rather than a communal issue. It has taken up the struggle for justice for Pahlu Khan and others and is mobilising public opinion against the communal fanatics. They contributed Rs.3 lakhs to the family of Pahlu Khan and Rs.50,000 to Ajmat who was injured in the attack by the so called '*Gou Rakshaks*'. CITU gave call to all its state committees "to extend solidarity and support to the peasantry by directing CITU unions to join the AIKS at local level for fund collection and also the communal amity meetings on 30 April 2017 in good numbers."

On Dalits

Meeting the President on Violence against Dalits

CPI(M) Polit Bureau members Brinda Karat and Subhashini Ali along with the affected Dalit families from the Shabbirpur village in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh met the President of India on 17 May. The President gave the delegation a sympathetic hearing and expressed his anguish saying that he would do whatever was in his power to ensure justice to the Dalits of Shabbirpur. The delegation handed over a memorandum to the President giving the details.

On the 14 April the Dalits of Shabbirpur village wanted to install a statue of Dr. Ambedkar in the Ravidas temple in the village. Some upper caste people objected and a BJP MLA complained to the police. The police came and stopped the work of installation. There was no opposition.

However, on 5 May, upper caste Thakurs of the area were celebrating Rana Pratap Jayanti with the installation of a statue in the neighbouring village of Simlana. They took out a procession with loud music through the Dalit area. They were armed with swords, country-made firearms and shouting objectionable slogans in an attempt to re-assert their superiority. The Dalit village Pradhan complained to the police. Some policemen did come, but did nothing. Then the Upper casteists went on rampage in the Dalit area; burnt 58 homes along with various agricultural implements; 25/26 motorcycles, small vans; groceries and various possessions including children's books and ration cards. 4 shops were also burnt. 2 fire engines and a PAC

truck were prevented from entering the village. 14 people including 5 women and 1 boy aged 14 have received injuries, some of them are grievous and admitted in the district hospital.

Tragically, a young man from the upper caste, who lived 20 kms away from the site, died during this incident. His post-mortem report has stated that he died due to asphyxiation. His family has been given Rs.15 lakhs as compensation. Shockingly, the Dalits received no compensation or assurance from the district administration. The attack on them by the more powerful social group in the area has also not been addressed properly. Many false cases have been foisted on the Dalits.

This created a situation of tension and conflict in Saharanpur. The formation of the BJP Government in UP has encouraged vigilante groups of its supporters, including the rapidly expanding Hindu Yuva Vahini which is chief minister Yogi Adityanath's own organization, to attack different sections of people in the State with impunity. BJP leaders, including elected representatives, have also participated in these attacks. One such attack was witnessed in Saharanpur on the 20 April when a mob led by the BJP, MP attacked the residence of the SSP himself and this officer was subsequently transferred.

If this situation of aggression under the patronage of the ruling party with complete impunity continues, many parts of UP are in danger of descending into spirals of caste and communal violence.

Crime against Women

Supreme Court Judgment on 'Nirbhaya' Case

(Extracts from the judgment)

The three judges bench of the Supreme Court, comprising of Justices Dipak Misra, Ashok Bhushan and R Banumathi; in their concurring judgments on 5 May, 2017 upheld the death penalty to four convicts in Nirbhaya gang-rape and murder case delivered by the trial court on 13 September, 2013 and confirmed by the Delhi High Court on 12 March, 2014.

In the judgement, Justice R. Banumathi said, "I have gone through the judgment of my esteemed Brother Justice Deepak Misra. I entirely agree with the reasoning adopted by him and the conclusions arrived at. However, in view of the significant issues involved in the matter, in the light of settled norms of appreciation of evidences in rape cases and the role of the Judiciary in addressing the crime against women, I would prefer to give my additional reasoning for concurrence."

"3. Crime against women – an area of concern: Over the past few decades, legal advancements and policy reforms have done much to protect women from all sources of violence and also to sensitize the public on the issue of protection of women and gender justice. Still the crimes against women are on the increase. As per annual report of National Crime Records Bureau titled, 'Crime in India 2015'...a total of 3,27,394 cases of crime against women were reported in the year 2015, which shows an increase of over 43% in crime against women since 2011, when 2,28,650 cases were reported. A percentage change of 110.5% in the case of crime against women has been witnessed over the past decade (2005 – 2015) meaning thereby that crime against women has more than doubled in a decade. An overall crime rate under the head, 'crime against women' was reported as 53.9% in 2015 with Delhi UT at the top spot."

"The statistics of National Crime Records Bureau which I have indicated in the beginning of my judgment show that despite the progress made by women in education and in various fields and changes brought in ideas of women's rights, respect for women is on the decline and crimes against women are on the increase. Offences against women are not a women's issue alone but, human rights issue. Increased rate of

crime against women is an area of concern for the law-makers and it points out an emergent need to study in depth the root of the problem and remedy the same through a strict law and order regime. There are a number of legislations and numerous penal provisions to punish the offenders of violence against women. However, it becomes important to ensure that gender justice does not remain only on paper.”

“In order to combat increasing crime against women, as depicted in the statistics of National Crime Records Bureau, the root of the problem must be studied in depth and the same be remedied through stringent legislation and other steps. In order to secure social order and security, it is imperative to address issues concerning women, in particular crimes against women on priority basis.”

“Stringent legislation and punishments alone may not be sufficient for fighting increasing crimes against women. In our tradition bound society, certain attitudinal change and change in the mind-set is needed to respect women and to ensure gender justice. Sensitization of the public on gender justice through TV, media and press should be welcomed. On the practical side, few of the suggestions are worthwhile to be considered. Banners and placards in the public transport vehicles like autos, taxis and buses etc. must be ensured. Use of street lights illuminated bus stops and extra police patrol during odd hours must be ensured. Police/security guards must be posted at dark and lonely places like parks, streets etc. Mobile apps for immediate assistance of women should be introduced and effectively maintained. Apart from effective implementation of the various legislation protecting women, change in the mind set of the society at large and creating awareness in the public on gender justice, would go a long way to combat violence against women.”

“We have a responsibility to set good values and guidance for posterity. In the words of great scholar, Swami Vivekananda, *‘the best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women.’* Crime against women not only affects women’s self esteem and dignity but also degrades the pace of societal development. I hope that this gruesome incident in the capital and death of this young woman will be an eye-opener for a mass movement **‘to end violence against women’** and **‘respect for women and her dignity’** and sensitizing public at large on gender justice. Every individual, irrespective of his/her gender must be willing to assume the responsibility in fight for gender justice and also awaken public opinion on gender justice. Public at large, in particular men, are to be sensitized on gender justice. The battle for gender justice can be won only with strict implementation of legislative provisions, sensitization of public, taking other proactive steps at all levels for combating violence against women and ensuring widespread attitudinal changes and comprehensive change in the existing mind set. We hope that this incident will pave the way for the same.”

In Tamilnadu

Workers’ Strike on Peasants Distress

Tamilnadu is facing severe drought adding to the already distress conditions of the farmer. 200 farmers and agricultural workers committed suicide not being able to pay dues.

Supporting 42 days struggle of the farmers for their demands to declare Tamilnadu as drought affected, waiving farmers’ loan, compensation to families of farmers who committed suicide; and condemning both central and state governments; all trade unions of Tamilnadu jointly gave call to the working class for a day’s strike on 25 April. Political parties - CPI(M), CPI, DMK, VCK Congress - gave call for statewide bandh. Traders Association also supported. It was total strike and bandh associated with demonstrations, dharnas etc in the state.

INTERNATIONAL

May Day Rally and WFTU Presidential Council Meeting in Havana

K. Hemalata, President CITU

May Day in most of the capitalist countries is an occasion to remember the Chicago Hay Market martyrs and their struggle for eight hours work. It is a day to express solidarity with the workers all over the world who are still continuing their struggle on the same demand, over 130 years after the Hay Market episode. It is a day to affirm the determination of the working class to continue in the path of struggle, overcoming the depredations and oppressions of the ruling classes to achieve the ultimate goal of emancipation from all exploitation.

The atmosphere in socialist Cuba is totally different. May Day in Cuba is an occasion to celebrate achievements of the working class and the toiling people in a socialist society established in 1959. May Day, declared a holiday, is celebrated as a big festival across the country.

The Cuban Workers Trade Union Central (CTC) organises the May Day rally in Havana every year, inviting fraternal trade union leaders from all around the world. Representatives of Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) have been participating in the May Day events every year.

May Day this year was the first after the passing away of Fidel Castro, the legendary leader of Cuba who steered the Cuban revolution to victory and then led the country till 2008. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) chose to hold the meeting of its Presidential Council, the first after its 17th Congress, in Havana to honour the memory of Fidel Castro, who took great interest in the revival and reactivation of WFTU. This meeting was scheduled on 3-4 May 2017, immediately following May Day. Hemalata, president and Swadesh Dev Roye, secretary of CITU, who are both members of the presidential council of WFTU were nominated by CITU to participate in the May Day celebrations in Havana as well.

May Day Rally in Havana

The huge rally in Havana reflected the festive mood of the people. The CTC has reported that around 8 lakhs people participated in the rally in Havana and 6 million people all together in rallies that were held in all cities and towns in the entire country. This, in a country with a total population of only 11.39 million!

The foreign guests of CTC were taken to the Revolution Square at 5 O'clock in the early morning. People were already gathering by that time. By around 6 O'clock hundreds of thousands of people were standing patiently behind the main banner. Workers from all sectors and peasants, women and men came with their entire families. Small children, young men and women, the old marched in the rally that started at 07.30 am; many parents carried their toddlers on their shoulders; the differently abled persons participated in the rally in their wheel chairs. Almost all of them carried banners, flags, festoons and pictures of Fidel, Che and Raul Castro. The peasants carried sugarcane plants, the major crop in Cuba. Almost everyone was enthusiastically waving to the spectators and shouting slogans hailing Cuban revolution and socialism.

Thousands of foreign spectators witnessed the rally from the side earmarked for them near the Jose Marti memorial museum. Many of them were from Europe and the USA; most of them were from Latin America. In the last two years Americans comprised the second largest foreign delegation participating in a show of solidarity with Cuba.

The leadership of CTC and the Communist Party of Cuba led by Raul Castro, President of Cuba stood all along waving to the participants in the rally from the beginning till the last person crossed the square. There were, however, no speeches. Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, general secretary of CTC alone made a brief speech before the rally started. He asserted the commitment of the working class of the country to a socialist,

independent and prosperous Cuba. He strongly criticised the USA for not lifting the economic, financial and commercial embargo despite all the hype about restoring bilateral relations. He demanded compensation for the serious damage caused to Cuba due to the embargo and also return of the territory of Guantanamo occupied by the USA.

As every year, on 2 May an international solidarity meeting was held in the modern auditorium of the International Convention Centre in Havana. More than 1000 delegates from across the world participated in this meeting to express solidarity with the Cuban people and also with the people fighting against the interventions of US imperialism in different Latin American countries. Representatives from Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela spoke about the conditions in their countries. George Mavrikos, general secretary of WFTU addressed the meeting. Hemalata conveyed solidarity on behalf of CITU. CTC honoured George Mavrikos and Valentin Pacheco, senior leader of WFTU from Peru for their contribution to the international trade union movement.

WFTU Presidential Council Meeting

The first meeting of the presidential council of WFTU, after its 17th Congress in Durban was held on 3-4 May. 55 members of the presidential council from across the world attended the meeting. Mzwandile Michael Makwayiba, president of WFTU presided over the meeting. 40 participants spoke on the report presented by George Mavrikos. The initiatives taken by the WFTU headquarters during this period to implement the decisions of the 17th Congress were appreciated by the speakers. At the same time the need to develop the ideological consciousness of the working class to enable it to face the present challenging situation and strengthen the organisation were also emphasised. Hemalata spoke on behalf of CITU. Swadesh Dev Roye, deputy general secretary of WFTU and in charge of the Trade Union Internationals (TUIs), presented a report about the functioning of the TUIs.

The presidential council of WFTU decided to organise international conferences of young workers in November in Rome and of women on International Women's Day next year in Panama. It has also decided to celebrate the centenary of the Great October Revolution by organising seminars on three important topics – 'The rights achieved by the working class in socialism', 'The leading role of the working class in emancipation of society' and 'The overthrow of socialism and the impact on the people due to the changes in the international correlation of class forces'. WFTU has decided to focus on trade union training and education in 2018.

The CTC organised a visit to Expo Cuba, a pavilion of Cuban industry which showcased the various products to meet the requirements of the people of the country that are being produced in the country overcoming the difficulties due to the inhuman blockade imposed by the USA

CTUs Boycotted Labour Ministry Meeting on May Day

10 central trade unions - INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, UTUC and LPF – boycotted a meeting called by the union labour ministry on 1 May, 2017 and in a joint statement stated the reasons. The ministry had sent invitation to the central trade unions for attending '*an event to celebrate International Labour Day*'. However, the programme given shows launch of schemes by the EPFO / ESIC.

"The Central Trade Unions consider May Day as the Day to commemorate the struggles of the working class all over the world and to reiterate commitment to the fight for the rights of the working people," the statement noted. This NDA government has continuously been attacking the hard earned rights of the working class of India in the name of "ease of doing business". It has made a mockery of the tripartism. The government has already amended and proposed drastic changes in various labour laws which will remove more than 71% of the workers from the coverage of 14 basic labour laws including the Minimum Wages Act, PF, ESI, Bonus etc whereas only three percent of the total workforce is covered under these Acts.

"This government which tries to bring law to increase the working hours from 8 hours to 12 hours organizing a meeting 'to celebrate' the International Labour Day, which is the day of martyrdom of the Haymarket heroes for 8 hours working day, is nothing but deceit to the working class of the country."

The meeting was also meant for unilateral declaration of schemes from ESIC / EPFO when the government is moving to dismantle these in the name of "Social Security Code

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

State	Centre	Feb. 2017	Mar. 2017	State	Centre	Feb. 2017	Mar. 2017
AP	GUNTUR	270	270	MHR	MUMBAI	282	283
	VIJAYWADA	268	270		NAGPUR	303	304
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	273	275		NASIK	286	286
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	250	251		PUNE	271	273
	GUWAHATI	240	242		SHOLAPUR	288	287
	LABAC SILCHAR	253	255	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	288	289
	MARIANI JORHAT	236	236		ROURKELA	280	284
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	234	235	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	291	292
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	295	295	PUN	AMRITSAR	275	275
CHD	CHANDIGARH	271	273		JALANDHAR	273	275
CHS	BHILAI	303	304		LUDHIANA	271	273
DLI	DELHI	249	250	RJN	AJMER	256	254
GOA	GOA	291	294		BHILWARA	268	268
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	256	259		JAIPUR	264	262
	BHAVNAGAR	258	258	TN	CHENNAI	256	253
	RAJKOT	264	265		COIMBATORE	257	258
	SURAT	251	250		COONOR	273	275
	VADODARA	254	254		MADURAI	265	269
HRY	FARIDABAD	247	251		SALEM	264	263
	YAMUNANAGAR	267	269		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	273	276
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	252	253	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	286	291
J&K	SRINAGAR	255	254		HYDERABAD	240	241
JRK	BOKARO	269	266		WARRANGAL	283	285
	GIRIDIH	292	294	TRP	TRIPURA	244	248
	JAMSHEDPUR	316	316	UP	AGRA	294	296
	JHARIA	298	298		GHAZIABAD	272	273
	KODARMA	312	311		KANPUR	281	279
	RANCHI HATIA	305	307		LUCKNOW	270	270
KNT	BELGAUM	285	285		VARANASI	274	271
	BENGLURU	282	285	WB	ASANSOL	299	300
	HUBLI DHARWAR	294	295		DARJEELING	256	256
	MERCARA	285	289		DURGAPUR	299	298
	MYSORE	291	289		HALDIA	305	304
KRL	ERNAKULAM	277	279		HOWRAH	258	259
	MUNDAKKAYAM	292	293		JALPAIGURI	263	264
	QUILON	321	322		KOLKATA	258	258
MP	BHOPAL	268	270		RANIGANJ	242	245
	CHHINDWARA	276	277		SILIGURI	252	252
	INDORE	250	251				
	JABALPUR	275	275				
ALL INDIA INDEX						274	275

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Countrywide May Day Celebration



Bangalore, Karnataka



Sonbhadra, U. P.



Barakar, West Bengal



Koderma, Jharkhand



Punjab



Rourkela, Odisha



Andaman & Nicobar Islands

WFTU Havana Presidential Council Meeting



(From top) **WFTU General Secretary George Mavrikos presenting report; CITU President Hemalata in the Presidium; CITU Secretary & WFTU Dy. General Secretary S. Dev Roye presenting report on TUIs** *(Report page: 24)*