



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

National Convention on Workers Charter

(Report Page5)



Workers Contribution to People's Flood Relief Fund



Rs.62 lakh plus, collected by CITU state committees across the country and sent through its Kerala state committee, was handed over to the chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan by CITU leaders. (From left) T. P. Ramakrishnan (labour minister), E. Kareem, Pinarayi Vijayan, A. Anandham and K.J. Thomas. Workers donations were also sent directly through other committees.

Jute Workers Strike in West Bengal

(Report Page20)



CITU state general secretary Anadi Sahoo addressing striking workers at Ladlo Jute Mill gate

BHEL Workers Strike in Trichy (Tamilnadu)

(Report Page18)



WORKING CLASS

APRIL 2019
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Editorial

Defeat BJP; Defend Democracy & People's Unity For a Pro-people Alternative

BJP-RSS and their Modi government are carrying on an undeclared war on the people of India. They have been carrying on 'enemy inside' campaign in line with RSS ideology. It is anti-thesis to democracy and is essentially associated with application of force. 'Enemy inside' campaign is covered with 'patriotism' wrapper.

Demonetisation why; because, 'enemy inside'. Behind Pulwama and post-Pulwama – 'enemy inside'. They are Indian citizens, yet Kashmiris and they are 'enemies inside'. They are Indian citizens, yet they are Muslims and 'enemies inside'. They are socially oppressed sections, yet they are 'enemy inside' because they raise issue of institutional killing of Rohit Vemula; participate in celebrating the Battle of Koregaon; oppose Manubad and Brahmanical concept of society. For them tribals are not Adivasis, they are Van Vasis, the Abarnas, they do not even belong Bama-divided society. They are the 'enemies inside'.

Since their ideology is anti-thesis of democracy, they refuse to accept the concept of debate and criticism. They are opposed to federalism for a unitary constitution of the country. One by one Constitutional institutions are being weakened for a centralized power. For this the chosen enemies must be economically and socially weak and vulnerable sections; belong to minorities and marginalized sections.

Crony capitalism is one of its significant feature – Ambani, Adani et al. Therefore, their enemies are the workers and other toiling sections and those who talk about unity in diversity and integration of the nation.

Their chosen enemies must combine hands together and throw out this rule lock stock and barrel. Democracy must be preserved by using democratic instrument. There may not be second opportunity as Sakshi Maharaj spelled out.

Defeat them in 17th Lok Sabha election.

- Defeat BJP;
- Defend democracy and people's unity for a pro-people economic and social alternative.

Condolence

Comrade Ajit Mukherjee

Passing away of Comrade Ajit Mukherjee, the veteran leader of steel workers union and their movement at Durgapur, at late night of on 3 March, 2019, is a big loss to the working class movement, CITU said in a condolence statement.

Comrade Ajit Mukherjee was one of the veterans and pioneers of building the steel workers movement in Durgapur in late sixties and seventies braving physical attacks, onslaughts and atrocities. He played frontline role in expanding and consolidating CITU throughout the steel industry. He was one of the founder office bearers of Steel Workers Federation of India and continued to guide its movement as its vice president till the last.

CITU conveyed its condolence to all his comrades and family members and paid respectful homage to the memory of the departed leader.

Some ESIC Decisions

177th meeting of ESIC, held on 19 February, 2019 in New Delhi, has taken some important decisions on long pending issues, being pursued by the workers representatives, as below.

1. For eligibility of treatment of the dependent parents, the upper limit of monthly income of the IP has been raised from Rs.5000 to Rs.9000.
2. With increase of ESI coverage in areas and in IPs numbers, 30 bedded ESI hospitals, with better healthcare facilities, will be opened having over 20,000 IPs in plain areas and over 15,000 IPs in hilly areas. Under these criteria, existing 6 bedded hospitals and dispensaries will be upgraded to 30 bedded hospitals.
3. Eligibility period for entitlement of Super Speciality services for IPs has been reduced to 6 months service (78 days of contribution) and for their family members 156 days of service (78 days in each contribution period) from the date of registration.
4. Rate of contribution of employees and employers will be reduced from Rs.1.75% and Rs.4.75 % to Rs.1% and Rs.4% respectively with effect from 1 April, 2019.
5. After bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, as the existing ESIC hospital in Hyderabad is in Telangana, one new similar hospital will be established in Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.
6. To streamline the system, both employers and employees contributions will be collected through single ECR (Electronic Challan-cum-Return) for both ESI and PF.

(Contribution: Prasanta N Choudhury, CITU representative in ESIC)

Income Inequality

The richest 10% of Indians own 77.4% of the country's wealth.

The richest 1% own 51.5%.

The bottom 60%, the majority of the population, own 4.7%.

“While everybody talks about development these days, a legitimate question from the Credit Suisse data is: whose development are we talking about? Is it development for the top 1%, or for the top 10%, or the poorest 60%?”

(From: 2018 Global Wealth Report by Credit Suisse; By Livemint; 23 October, 2018)

17th Lok Sabha Election

Workers' Charter for National Alternative

Around one thousand different level functionaries of 10 central trade unions - INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, AICCTU, UTUC, LPF, TUCC and SEWA - and independent national federations of employees of bank, insurance, defence, central and state governments etc; met at the Constitutional Club auditorium in New Delhi on 5 March.

The convention unanimously adopted a declaration which congratulated the workers of the country for the successful two days countrywide general strike on 8-9 January 2019 against the anti-people, anti-worker and anti-national policies of the BJP government at the Centre and called upon the working class to launch countrywide campaign to ensure BJP's defeat in the ensuing Parliament election. All participating central trade unions along with the federations signed the declaration.

The declaration also contains 46 point *Workers Charter* for an alternative economic policy for the people; urged the political parties to include these demands in their respective election manifesto; and called upon the entire working class to launch massive countrywide campaign on these demands for the alternative.

The convention was presided over by the presidium, comprised of CITU president Hemalata and Mohan Sharma (AITUC), Deepak Sharma (INTUC), CAR Sridhar (HMS), R K Sharma (AIUTUC), Prabir Banerjee (TUCC), Lata (SEWA), Santosh Rai (AICCTU), Jawahar Singh (LPF) and Ashok Ghosh (UTUC).

CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, Amarjeet Kaur (AITUC), Ashok Singh (INTUC), Harbhajan Singh Sidhu (HMS), Satyavan Singh (AIUTUC), G. Devarajan (TUCC), Sonia George (SEWA), Rajiv Dimri (AICCTU), Rashid Khan (LPF) and Shatrujith (UTUC) addressed the convention in support of the *Workers Charter* and for defeat of BJP in the election.

The *Workers Charter* is an expansion of the workers 12 point demands which the entire trade union movement of the country has been fighting for several years including general strike on 8-9 January 2019. The neoliberal agenda, being aggressively pursued by the present BJP, led to concentration of wealth in a few hands at the expense of the vast workers and peasant masses and widened disparities to vulgar heights. The country has adequate resources to meet the demands raised in the 'Workers' Charter'.

The Workers' Charter

- Fix national minimum wage as per the recommendations of 15th Indian Labour Conference and Supreme Court judgement in the Raptakos & Brett case, which has been reiterated unanimously by subsequent 45th and 46th Indian Labour Conference;
- Abolish Contract Labour system in perennial nature of job pending which strictly implement equal wage and benefits to contract workers doing the same job as permanent workers, as per Supreme Court judgment;

- Stop outsourcing and contractorisation of jobs of permanent and perennial nature;
- Strict implementation of equal pay for equal work for men and women as per Indian Constitution and equal remuneration act and also reiterated by Supreme Court;
- Minimum Support Price for the produce of the farmers as per the recommendations of Swaminathan Commission, strengthen public procurement system;
- Loan waiver to farmers and Institutional credit for the small and marginal farmers;
- Comprehensive legislation covering social security and working conditions for all workers including agricultural workers;
- Take immediate concrete measures to control sky rocketing prices of essential commodities; ban speculative trading in essential commodities. Expand and strengthen public distribution system; no compulsory linkage of Aadhar to avail services of PDS;
- Check unemployment through policies encouraging labour intensive establishments; link financial assistance/incentives/concessions to employers with employment generation in the concerned establishments; fill up all vacant posts in government departments; lift the ban on recruitment and 3% annual surrender of government posts;
- Assure minimum pension of Rs 6000 per month and indexed pension to all;
- Recognise workers employed in different government schemes, including anganwadi workers and helpers, ASHAs and others employed in the National Health Mission, Mid day Meal workers, Para teachers, teaching and non teaching staff of National Child Labour Projects, Gramin chowkidars etc as workers and pay minimum wages, social security benefits including pension etc to all of them;
- Immediately revoke 'Fixed Term Employment' which is in violation of the spirit of ILO Recommendation 204 which India has ratified;
- Stop disinvestment/strategic sale of public sector undertakings; Give revival package to the important PSUs in the public interest;
- Revival and opening of sick Jute, industries and Tea plantations, as thousands of workers in these industries are facing distress, malnutrition and deaths due to closure;
- Revoke the decision to privatise Railways, Defence, Port and Dock, Banks, Insurance, Coal etc. Immediately revoke decision allowing commercial mining of coal mines;
- Stop privatising Defence production and closure of Defence Units. Strengthen and expand State Owned Defence Industry to achieve self reliance in Defence;
- Stringent measures to recover bad loans in Banks, take criminal action against deliberate corporate defaulters, Do not pass on the burden of bad loans on banking public through penalties and higher service charges; Stop merger and amalgamation of public sector Banks; Stop closure of Bank Branches; Increase interest rate on Bank deposits to offset inflation rate;
- Periodical wage revision to all CPSU Workers without insisting any affordability condition;
- Withdraw the Motor Vehicle Act (Amendment) Bill 2017, and Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2018;
- Immediately resolve the issues of the central government employees related to the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission;
- Scrap NPS and restore the Old Pension Scheme;
- Stop anti-worker and pro-employer amendments to the labour laws and codifications; Ensure strict implementation of the existing labour laws;
- Implement paid maternity leave of 26 weeks, maternity benefit and crèche facilities for women workers no incentive be given to employers who are following amended provision of Maternity Benefit Act as proposed by the Government;
- Strict implementation of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act; For increase political participation immediate enactment on 33% reservation for women in state legislatures and Parliament;

- Ratify ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining along with the ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers;
- Stop dilution of OSH & Welfare provisions through merger of 13 Acts in one Code; Ensure implementation of existing Acts and rules; Vacant posts of factory inspectors, Mines inspectors etc and lift ban on inspections; Ratify ILO C-155 and recommendation 164 related to OSH & Environment; Tripartite audit of human and financial loss due to accident should be mandatory;
- Strengthen Bipartism and Tripartism; make recognition of trade union by the employers mandatory in every establishment; no decision should be taken on any issue related to labour without consensus through discussion with trade unions, ensure regular, meaningful social dialogue with workers representatives;
- Cut the subsidies given to the corporates;
- Right to work as fundamental right by amending the Constitution;
- 300 days of work under MGNREGA; Enact similar legislation to cover urban areas; Fix minimum wages not less than minimum wages of the state;
- Strict measures to stop the inhuman practice of manual scavenging; Compensation, as per Supreme Court judgment, to the families who die while cleaning sewers;
- Strict implementation of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act;
- Immediately fill up all backlogs in the posts reserved for SC/ST; reservation of jobs for SC/ST in private sector employment also;
- No eviction of Adivasis from their habitats, strict implementation of Forest Rights Act for Adivasis;
- Protect couples opting for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages; Ensure strict actions against those encouraging/ resorting to so called 'honour killings';
- Ensure strict punishment for all guilty of rape and other cases of violence against women; Make such offences "Rarest of the rare" with capital punishment to ensure safety of women in letter and spirit;
- Ensure effective implementation of Article 51A of the Constitution that calls upon all citizens to promote harmony, spirit of common brotherhood, diversities and to transcend religious, linguistic, regional and sectional culture and to denounce policies derogatory to the dignity of women;
- Free and compulsory education to all children up to Class XII along with technical education; The budget allocation for education should be 10% of the GDP;
- Free health care for all; Strengthen health infrastructure, particularly in the rural and tribal areas; Increase government expenditure on health to 5% of GDP;
- Potable drinking water be provided to whole populace;
- Protection of street vendors should be ensured; States should frame rules accordingly;
- In order to protect the interests of Home Based Workers which is women dominated sector ILO Convention 177 for Home Work be ratified along with an Act for Home Based Workers;
- Workers should have active and effective participation in all Welfare Boards constituted for their welfare; The unspent amount of cess collected under Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board be spent only on welfare of workers; Welfare Boards should have adequate workers representation; The functioning of the boards should be strengthened so that the workers can get registered with the board and have easy access to welfare benefits;
- The Government should direct the States to frame the rules for inclusion of waste recyclers of the solid waste management in the cities at all levels;
- Working Journalists Act should be amended to include journalists and workers from all media organisations to ensure decent wages and job security; Constitute new wage board for journalists in print, electronic and digital media to revise wages in media organisations.

A skewed approach to labour issues

K. R. Shyam Sundar

NITI Aayog is stuck on a misguided notion that ‘labour flexibility’ will boost investment, ignoring skilling and other factors

The NITI Aayog (NA) has outlined its strategy for taking India to a nearly \$4-trillion sized economy riding on 9-10 per cent growth rate which in turn will be fuelled by a peaking of the investment rate at 36 per cent and a near-doubling of export revenue to \$800 billion by 2022-23. Hopefully, the economic miracle that it envisions will be “inclusive, sustained, clean and formalised”.

The subtext to this larger strategy implies generating good quality jobs and increasing female work participation rates. Its strategy with respect to labour and employment is based on two contestable assumptions. One, economic growth is essential to employment generation. Two, lack of labour flexibility is the main obstacle in the march to growth and creation of jobs.

The jobless growth story that India has experienced during the 2000s should have prompted the NITI Aayog to be more nuanced in its approach. The relationship between growth and jobs is not a linear one. The NITI Aayog is not alone in blaming labour laws for all the ills in the economy and the labour market.

While launching the Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana last September, the Centre observed that “the current scenario of employment in India...has transformed from a long-term employment to fixed short-term engagement (FTE) in the form of contract and temping,” thereby implicitly accepting the nature of this arrangement.

The Centre has exhorted States to formally adopt FTE, in a notification issued last March.

The Centre needs to understand that labour flexibility has not produced the desired outcomes such as higher investment. In a conference on “Jobs and Livelihood Creation” organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry and NITI Aayog in February 2018, former Labour Secretary Satyavathy observed that the amendment of Chapter V-B in Rajasthan and other States has not impacted significantly the investment inflows into them.

A study undertaken by Sanjay Upadhyaya and Pankaj Kumar of the V V Giri National Labour Institute in 2017 concluded that, “On their own strength, these amendments in labour laws have neither succeeded in attracting big investments, boost to industrialisation or to job creation...Rapid industrialisation, growth in investments and job creation would ultimately depend on so many other factors as well like development of infrastructure, stable law and order, availability of skilled manpower as per the requirements of the industry, boost in skill upgradation and multitasking efforts and the like.” (p.69).

Again, according to the Ease of Doing Business Study by the World Bank (2014), only a little over one-tenth of the respondent firms in India perceived labour regulations as a major constraint. Put in economic language, the actual percentage rise in economic benefits like employment and investment is much less than those anticipated by the lawmakers. Hence, it will pay well to look elsewhere for resolving labour market risks.

Women workers’ issues

The Report is disjointedly written — for example, in a para on “protection and social security” (p.14) it talks more about multiplicity/complexity of labour laws and enforcement issues than on the theme. Its recommendation, though positive, that women workers’ friendly laws should be enforced well, in fact, will have adverse effects on women’s employment, though arguably during the short and medium term.

Extension of maternity benefit to 26 weeks amongst others under the amended Maternity Benefit Act has arguably adversely affected employment prospects and even the existing employment of female workers, especially in start-ups which the government is keen to promote vigorously.

Now, the government is proposing to subsidise wages of female workers earning less than ₹15,000. However, it has little to say on the gender composition of committees and institutions created under the labour laws. While focusing on supply side issues concerning women workers, this should be combined with institutional strengths.

The NITI Aayog talks of effective compliance with respect to working conditions, the new maternity benefit law, and minimum wages and a National Policy for Domestic Workers.

But all these require an adequate and trained enforcement machinery which in the name of reform has been dismantled. To be sure, no one is arguing against reform of labour administration system to make it more transparent and vigilant.

While speaking on the enforcement issue, the NITI Aayog's recommendation for speedy and low-cost resolution of industrial disputes begs a lot of questions; it is utterly oblivious to the inadequacies of labour judiciary system. It is well-known that delayed justice results in inefficient economic outcomes especially in a market-driven economy.

Back-of-the-envelope calculations show that there was one judicial body for nearly 85,000 employees during 1998-99 and it 'may' be worse now — 'may', because growing informalisation of workers and weakening of trade unions have 'reduced' industrial disputes and hence the workload on the labour judiciary!

Various law commissions have highlighted delayed justice for labourers/firms. Compulsory adjudication was being considered even in the 1940s and it continues to be relevant even today for voiceless workers. But the debate on reforms has been centred around by easy hire-and-fire clauses and not on judicial system reform.

Trade union rights

Further, the NITI Aayog typically completely leaves out any mention of 'industrial democracy' to meet stated objectives like fair wages or even minimum wages. Trade unions perform important social and economic functions (as an agency of collective agreements, reduction of transaction costs, etc). They constitute one of the fundamental human rights, according to the ILO. Yet, trade union recognition law is still absent in most States and at the national level.

Facts concerning skills — around 95 per cent of workforce without formal training in India — are far more threatening to productivity than trade unions, strikes or restrictive labour laws.

The NITI Aayog needs to really retool itself to be able to come up with a balanced and conceptually consistent labour market and industrial relations strategy, to deliver quality jobs and inclusive growth.

(The author is professor, HRM Area, XLRI-Xavier School of Management, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand)

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Expose Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan Dhan Yojana; Thwart BJP Government's Attempt to loot the workers

A R Sindhu

Modi Government announced the 'Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan' in the 2019 budget as pension scheme for unorganized sector workers who earns less than Rs.15,000 a month. The Finance Minister announced "The scheme will provide assured monthly pension of Rs 3,000, with a contribution of 100 rupees per month, for workers in unorganised sector after 60 years of age." He said that the government will also provide a matching contribution of Rs 100 for every unorganised worker covered under the scheme. He claimed that "The scheme will benefit 10 crore workers, may become the world's biggest pension scheme for the unorganised sector in five years". Later the Prime Minister announced that they are going to cover all 42 core workers.

However, the government, which allocated Rs.750 crores for cow protection in the budget, made allocation of Rs.500 crores to cover the 42 crore unorganized sector workers who according to the minister "produce half of the Country's GDP"!

BJP, which had promised to "strengthen the Pension and Health Insurance safety nets for all kinds of labourers" in its election manifesto in 2014, had announced this scheme just one month before the next Lok Sabha Election. The scheme is notified under the 'Unorganised Sector workers' Social Security Act 2008.' In its five years of rule the central trade unions organized three general strikes in which one of the major demands was the social security and pension of Rs.6000 per month for all workers. BJP did not remember the unorganized sector workers till the elections were declared. This is one of the biggest election stunts, 'chunavi joomla', of BJP government.

Exclusion of the needy: The scheme which claims to be covering 'all' unorganized sector workers' excludes nearly twenty percent of the workers who are above 40 years of age! It means that the workforce above 40 years of age, which is the most needy, will not be included in the scheme.

No one is going to be benefitted for the next 20 years: The exclusion of the workers above the age of 40 yrs means that no worker is going to get any benefit for the next 20 years! A worker of the age 18 years will keep paying the government for the next 42 years. 10 crore workers will pay Rs.12,000 crore annually as premium for the next 20 years; i.e,the poor riksha pullers, rehri patri workers, mid day meal workers, construction workers, anganwadi workers and helpers, MNREG workers, ASHA workers all will pay to the government Rs.2,40,000 crore, in 20 years without asking a single penny back! This is nothing but making the unorganized sector workers who even do not have any permanent income, pay the government such a huge amount which the government can utilize for financing the corporates.

Assuming that even one tenth of the claim of the government is achieved, i.e. one crore workers are enrolled, they will pay Rs.1200 crores to the government in an year and Rs.24,000 crores in 20 years. The allocation for the so called matching grant by Modi government is just Rs.500 crores.

Only spouse can be the nominee: In this strange scheme, designed to loot the workers, only the spouse (husband/wife) of the worker can be the nominee. It means that the workers who are single, widow or widower and he/she die before 60 years, the entire amount will be taken over by fund and her/his kins will not get any money. Only the spouse will either get the accumulated money or he/she can continue in the scheme.

Many women, working in the unorganised sector, are widows. Even if the children of the worker who die (even in an accident) are minors, they won't get a single paisa.

In case of accident and permanent handicap of a worker, either his/her spouse can continue or he/she can get back whatever amount paid by him/her only. There is no provision for any other benefit. In many schemes of the LIC, there are much better provisions.

Assured pension, Rs.3000 per month: The government declared that the workers will get a monthly pension of Rs.3000 per month. But even for the organized sector workers in EPF, the guaranteed pension is only Rs.1000 (That too very recently). Given, the track record of the government of India, one cannot believe that this promise can be fulfilled. Even if this promise is fulfilled, the value of Rs. 3000 after 20 years if we consider the inflation will be less than Rs.1000 whereas the demand of the trade union movement is monthly pension of minimum Rs.6000 for all workers.

Workers at loss as per interest calculation: There are some startling statistics about the loot of the workers through this scheme. According to National Herald Daily, the calculation goes like this; a person at the age of 18 joining the scheme will pay Rs.55 per month, with the government's contribution, it will be Rs.110 per month. He/She has to pay the amount for 42 years (till the age of 60 years). If this is remitted to a recurring deposit, the return after 42 years will be Rs.5,76,315. If we put this amount in fixed deposit the monthly interest will be Rs.5042. It means the worker will lose Rs.2042 per month and the principal amount of Rs.5,76,315.

If we go by the rates in any commercial bank in India, in 42 years, the accumulated amount will be Rs.4,48,922 and its monthly interest will be Rs.3367. So, the monthly loss will be Rs.337 in addition one will lose the accumulated Rs.4,48,922.

No need to pay back much: The life expectancy of Indian population is around 68 years. It will be definitely much less for the unorganized sector workers and may be 65 years or less. Experience shows that the malnourished, hungry worker will not even live upto 60 years. The workers who do not have a regular income will find it difficult to pay the premium. So all those money will go to the Fund.

EPF, ESI or Comprehensive social security scheme: If the intention of the government is good, why can't it include the unorganized sector workers in the EPF and ESI schemes or introduce such schemes, which had benefitted crores of workers and earned wide acceptability and credibility.

EPF is having provisions of loan and pension, partial withdrawal and the accumulated amount belong to the worker and his/her nominee. This government which declared the pension scheme for unorganized sector workers just one month before elections is not concerned that even the social security schemes like EPF and ESI cover even less than 50% of the workers who are legally entitled and has no programme for the enrolment. The government instead is now paying the share of the employers but not that of the employees in the EPF! While the allocation for this scheme is mere Rs.500 core, the government had already paid more than Rs.3648 crores for the employers' contribution to EPFO.

Moreover, there are reports that a considerable amount of the workers in the EPFO which was invested in the share market in tradable bonds in IL&FS Investor Company, in spite of the opposition of the workers' representatives in the board is totally lost with the company going bankrupted. The government is not coming out with any clarification. The fund accumulating in the PMSYM scheme also is at the same risk.

The Scheme Workers: The government is frantically pushing for enrolment of the Anganwadi workers, helpers, ASHA workers and even MNREGA workers (who get jobs less than 100 days a year in a family) etc. Although neither in the budget speech nor in the notification was

these sections included and nor the central ministries had issued letters to the states in this regard.

The Government claims in ten days more than 14 lakh workers are enrolled. The scheme necessitates linking of your bank account. The anganwadi workers, helpers, ASHA workers, Mid Day Meal workers all have bank accounts and the money can be deducted from their account. So the government pushes to include them so that there will be regular payment.

First of all, the anganwadi workers, helpers, ASHA workers or Mid Day Meal workers are not 'unorganized sector workers'. The government had already committed in the 45th Indian Labour Conference to recognize them as employees and include them in EPF and ESI. What about that promise? Are we to agree that we are unorganized sector workers?

In Pondicherry, where the anganwadi workers and helpers get a salary more than Rs.15,000 per month, but have no pension, cannot join this scheme. In states like Kerala, Haryana, Telangana, AP etc Anganwadi workers are getting around Rs.12,000 a month, and have promises of increase, will be excluded from the scheme once they get Rs.15000 per month.

The need of the hour is a government funded comprehensive social security scheme ensuring healthcare including maternity, accident protection, superannuation for pension, children's education etc for all other sections of working people including agricultural workers and peasants, with a token contribution just to facilitate enrolment.

In 5 years

Jobloss: 4.7 Crore

Unemployment: Urban – 7.1%, Rural – 5.8%

First time since 1993-94: India's male workforce is getting smaller

The national workforce has shrunk by 4.7 crore since 2011-12, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) labour force survey 2017-18 found out.

The size of India's male workforce – or men who are working – has reduced for the first time since 1993-94.

The Report, withheld by the Government, but reported by *Indian Express*, says that there are 28.6 crore employed men – a decline from 30.4 crore in 2011-12, when the last NSSO survey was conducted.

This downward trend is even stronger in rural areas than in urban areas with a 6.4% decline in the number of employed men in rural areas against 4.7% in urban.

NSSO data as saying, "While the employment loss in the rural segment hurt the women most (68 per cent), men suffered more (96 per cent) job losses in the urban areas."

The NSSO report puts the urban unemployment rate at 7.1% and the rural rate at 5.8%.

The report was first quoted in the *Business Standard* in January, 2019 saying that the NSSO found that unemployment in India was at a 45-year high in 2017-18.

This was the first job survey conducted after Narendra Modi's demonetisation move.

Data on employment – or the lack thereof – has been a controversial subject during the Modi regime. It was recently reported that a survey on jobs created under the Mudra scheme won't be released before the 2019 elections.

This is the third report on jobs data that the government has failed to release yet. In addition to the PLFS and the Mudra reports, the Labour Bureau's sixth annual employment-unemployment survey too has not been released. (From: *The Wire*)

8 March 2019 – International Women’s Day

“For Equality, Dignity and Safety”

CITU had decided to observe International Women’s Day (IWD) this year, highlighting the most pressing issues of women in general and working women in particular, linking these to the elections under the topic “**For Equality, Dignity and Safety**”.

The most relevant issues, which are in focus from past struggles, are:

- Women’s unpaid and underpaid labour including the recognition of the unpaid/underpaid care work of the scheme workers and denial of even statutory minimum wages and social security;
- Violence against women and children in society including sexual harassment at the workplace; and
- Representation of women in decision making bodies including 33% reservation in Parliament and Assemblies.

It was decided that these issues be brought onto the agenda in the elections, through building public pressure.

On this basis, this year’s International Women’s Day was observed by the CITU state committees and unions.

Safai workers in Patna observed IWD for the first time: In Patna, on 8 March 2019 International Women’s Day programme was organized at Nalanda Medical college. The programme, attended by both women and men Safai Karamcharis, was presided over by Radhika Devi. Arun Kumar Mishra, Bihar CITU leader, said that inequality is increasing the world over and women suffer the most. Anti-women social attitudes act as a big barrier for women’s advancement and religious, caste and gender based discrimination increases inequality. India is placed at 108 in the Gender Gap Index, with only Bangladesh ranking behind. He added that the unpaid work done by women in India, of at least 5 hours a day, amounts to 3.1% of the GDP.

Manjul Kumar Das said that slogan of for IWD this year is “Balance for Better” stating that gender equality, sex ratio equality and equality in wages are a necessary precondition for betterment. The struggle for these must be continued. He recollected that Clara Zetkin, in the 2nd Socialist International, had criticized the leaders who opposed women’s entry in factories on the grounds that they were responsible for lower wages and longer working hours.

NMCH Patna safai workers Sangeeta Devi and Punia Devi narrated how the contractor and accountant threatened them with loss of job and how, after joining the union, they replied “*We will work and have wages too, and will struggle together with male workers against fewer wage and for ESI and EPF.*”

Shankar Sah expressed happiness at the participation of the women workers in the IWD programme, which is proof of their rising consciousness. He stressed on the need to mobilize large numbers of women in the struggle for women’s safety, for abolition of contractisation, for Rs 18,000 per month minimum wage and Rs 300 monthly pension.

Kerala: International Women’s Day on March 8 was celebrated by the working women coordination committee. Copies of the document prepared by the All India centre were distributed to all the districts. A campaign was held based on this year’s theme - *Equality, Dignity and Safety*. Programmes were organised in 14 districts by the working women coordination committee. In Kannur, the programs were inaugurated by P.K.Srimathi. A *thiruvathira* based on the theme of the corrupt rule of the Modi government, was greatly appreciated by the public. Programmes in all the districts with large participation of women in these campaigns, proved the fact that the Kerala government as well as the LDF are giving prime importance to women’s safety and security.

Punjab: International Working Women Day was observed by the Anganwari Mulajam Union Punjab. A rally and public meeting was held at Khatka Kalan, the home town of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. The meeting falicitated the members of the union who got elected as members in the recently held panchayat elections in Punjab.

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Airways

CITU Opposes Privatisation of Airports

CITU denounced handing over six airports - Ahmadabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Trivandrum, Mangalore and Guwahati - to the crony private player Adani Group which has no-exposure to airport or aviation-related sector like Ambanis, of Rafale deal fame, has no-exposure in fighter jet sector. These airports have been put on fast track privatisation with target to complete the deal well before election is announced, a CITU statement said on 11 February, 2019.

All these airports are national assets which are developed and modernized by the Airport Authority of India (AAI) spending thousands of crores of rupees of public money. At the fag end of its term, Modi government is in desperate haste to hand over these readymade functional and profit making airports to the crony corporate.

As per terms of privatisation, which looks like big bonanza, the private operator will share only aeronautical revenue and not sharing huge non-aeronautical commercial revenues out of the real estate and huge commercial space annexed to every airport. It will make only Rs.2500 crore as onetime payment and thereafter Rs.525 crore annually as concession fee for six airports which is far short of total amount that public money has been spent through AAI for modernization and development of these six airports.

CITU called upon the working class in general and the trade union movement in particular to oppose and resist the privatisation of these six airports.

Protest in Guwahati against Privatisation of Airport



Organised by CITU and Joint Council of Trade Unions (JCTU), hundreds of workers and employees marched on the streets of Guwahati; staged demonstration and submitted memorandum

addressed to the prime minister on 5 March demanding withdrawal of decision of privatisation of Guwahati airport. Addressing the rally, CITU state general secretary Tapan Sarma and its vice president Satanjib Das said that Guwahati airport is not only sensitive but also is of international importance for the people of the entire North East region of the country and urged upon the people to defeat BJP and save the country.

Kerala LDF Model

“Vehemently opposing the move to privatise Trivandrum Airport” Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the state had already informed the Centre that it would form a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to operate it on the lines of Cochin International Airport (CIAL), reported the *New Indian Express* on 13 December, 2018.

“We’ve developed two international airports and our experience in the sector should be considered”, this the state government conveyed to the Centre strong disagreeing privatisation of Trivandrum International Airport. The two international airports, which Kerala government developed in public sector are Cochin International Airport (CIAL) and Kannur International Airport (KIAL). “Public sentiment is also in favour of retaining the airport in public sector,” he said while inaugurating the renovated domestic terminal (Terminal 1) at CIAL on 12 December. He also inaugurated the enhanced 40 MWp solar power production capacity and the solar carport on the airport premises.

The Chief Minister said that CIAL has set a model on the development front providing direct and indirect employment to 11,400 and 25,000 people respectively; 25% dividend and the state government receiving Rs.230 crore till date against an investment of Rs. 100 crore.

The state government has selected CIAL as the agency to implement the 610 km Kovalam-Bekal waterway project considering its efficiency. CIAL managing director V J Kurian said Kovalam–Bekal waterway’s first phase will be completed by 2020. The waterway connecting 11 districts and three airports will mark the dawning of a new era of development for Kerala.

Agitation to oppose Privatisation of Thiruvananthapuram Airport

Kerala government and the Airport Authority of India Employees Union (AAIEU) in Kerala are opposing privatisation of Thiruvananthapuram international airport. The land for the airport was acquired by the state government and handed over free of cost to AAI.

When the financial bids were opened in Delhi on 25 February to select the private player for operating, managing and developing Thiruvananthapuram international airport for the next 50 years, the LDF in Kerala observed it as *Deception Day*. It organised a march to the international airport on February 28, the day the Letter of Award (LOA) was to be handed over to Adani Group. The LDF is on an indefinite stir in front of the domestic terminal. The Action Council, headed by former Minister and CPI(M) leader M. Vijayakumar, is formed to stave off the privatisation move and to retain the premier airport in the public sector. The AAIEU is on an indefinite stir. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has taken a tough stance against the privatisation and has hinted that the path will not be rosy for the concessionaire.

All eyes are on whether the government will hand over the eight hectares of land for the proposed integrated airport terminal as announced earlier. The Vallakadavu-Vayyamoola Joint Action Council has announced that land cannot be surrendered in view of the Centre’s decision to handover the premier airport to a private player. (*From: The Hindu, 26 February, 2019*)

Determined Opposition

On 28 February, a determined chief minister moved the Kerala High Court against Adani's tender. He also wrote to prime minister Narendra Modi questioning the process that allowed a single private bidder, with no prior experience, win the bidding process.

In the case of the Thiruvananthapuram airport, Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) was also a bidder. "Adani does not know how to operate airports, but he knows Prime Minister Narendra Modi well," Pinarayi had said.

Why the objection

1. In his letter to the PM, the CM pointed out that a written assurance was given by the central government in 2003 that when a decision is taken to involve a private player to manage the airport, the centre would consult the state government. This is taking into account the fact that the state had given 635 acres of land for the airport, the value of which would be the state's stake in the airport.
2. He also said that it was surprising that the Request for Proposal (RFP) had no condition for prior experience in operating airports and all that a bidder needed was experience in infrastructure projects (!)

Interestingly, the Adani group is known for building infrastructure, specifically ports. The state government says that there is a 'shade of distrust' in the process with one private entity without prior experience winning most bids.

As the government has given free land, which will be considered its equity in the airport, Pinarayi asked Modi that KSIDC be allowed to match the bid made by Adani. This would ensure KSIDC would operate and manage the airport.

In its writ petition to the Kerala High Court, KSIDC alleged that the RFP for the bidding process was full of anomalies and that the whole tendering process was arbitrary, unreasonable and in violation of the principles of fairness and natural justice and showed favouritism towards Adani Enterprise Ltd.

Due process not followed in leasing airports to Adani

Regarding Centre's decision to lease out six airports to Adani Enterprises, the civil aviation ministry understood to have informed Rajya Sabha's committee on petitions that "mandatory" consultations with states and public were not held.

The ministry made its submissions at two such meetings on December 27 and 28 last year where it said that the consultations were not held before airports were leased out. The Rajya Sabha committee, while taking up a petition, sought the ministry's response if due process of consultation was followed before leasing out the facilities. This was in addition to queries on cost-benefit analysis of managing airports on PPP model and comparisons of AAI-managed airports with privately-run ones.

The ministry inter alia admitted that it did not consult with state governments or public prior to its decision to lease out six AAI airports. It also said that while Kerala approached the ministry of civil aviation to demand the first right of refusal to manage the Thiruvananthapuram airport, a similar proposal of Right of First Refusal (RoFR) was not made to other states for airports in their respective regions.

Though the ministry, in earlier meetings, had told the committee that consultations had not been held, it tempered its response of January 11, 2019, where it said, "As per the prescribed procedure, public consultation or consultation with the state governments are mandatory for leasing out of AAI owned airports through PPP mode." In a subsequent question on whether a similar proposal was given

to other states, the ministry said, "No other state government has approached the Central government as far as leasing out of these six AAI airports on PPP model so far."

Already, Kerala has moved Kerala High Court challenging AAI's "arbitrary and illegal" attempt to prefer a private entity for the management of Thiruvananthapuram airport. In a PIL filed on March 5, it said AAI's attempt to grant rights of operation, management and development of the airport to Adani Enterprises Ltd is not in public interest.

This time, the government incentivised bidding by allowing a 50-year lease; granting 100% private participation for operation, development and management unlike joint venture arrangements with GMR and GVK in Delhi and Mumbai; and allowed prospective bidders the entire non-air side development for commercial purposes including building hotels or malls. (From: *Times of India*, 9 March, 2019)

CITU's Letter to Civil Aviation Minister opposing Parivatisation

On 11 February, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen wrote to the union minister of civil aviation Suresh Prabhu registering CITU's strong protest against privatisation of 6 airports through so called PPP model. It is a retrograde step which is not in public interest, is a loss to the nation and against the interest of the AAI employees.

It created serious resentment among the employees of the Airport Authority of India which has been reflected in the overwhelming majority of employees of AAI endorsing through strike ballot the resolve of the Airports Authority Employees Union to go for industrial strike against such privatization move. The strike is supported by CITU.

CITU demanded of the government to refrain from taking such retrograde move of privatization of 6 airports.

Insurance

5th All India Conference of LICAOI



5th conference of LIC Agents Organisation of India (LICAOI) was held on 23-24 February in Lucknow at Chandrakant Biswal Manch in memory of the comrade who suddenly passed away previous day.

In the open session, the chairman of the reception committee and CITU state general secretary Premnath Rai welcomed the delegates. In her inaugural speech CITU president K. Hemalata referred to the world economic crisis and of Indian economy, attacks on the working class, loss of existing benefits and job-losses and issues before the LIC agents. Presiding over the open session Basudeb Acharia, Ex-MP spoke on the political and economic situation of the country and the issues being faced by LIC agents. About 1000 LIC agents participated in the open session.

For the first time, LICA OI held its women workers convention joined by 55 women agents. K. Hemalata inaugurated and guided the convention explaining the aims and object of women's participation bringing them in leadership position. Seven members participated in the discussion giving important suggestions. A. P. Savithri of Kerala and Gouri Nandi of West Bengal were elected as co-conveners of the women's committee of LICA OI.

479 delegates and 72 working committee members attended the delegates' session. In his presidential address Basudeb Acharya referred to the issues of the Agents, reminded them of their duty towards LIC and stressed on expanding the organisation.

General secretary's report was placed by P. G. Dileep; 38 members participated in the discussion and it was adopted unanimously. 14 resolutions were also adopted on: legislation for LIC agents, products and selling skill training, GST on premia and control of prices, pension, welfare fund, direct marketing by LIC; against labour law amendments, for assured minimum fixed earning of Rs.18,000, minimum pension of Rs.3,000; against disinvestment of PSUs, anti-people policies of Modi government, communalism etc.

The conference elected 293 members in 300-member general council, 106 in 112-member working committee and 23 of 27 office bearers with Basudev Acharya as its president, A. Sampath, MP as working president and P. G. Dileep as general secretary. Hemalata summed up the conference. *(Inputs: P. G. Dileep)*

Electricity

Powergrid Union Conference

Powergrid Workmen Union, South Zone of powergrid workmen in Tamilnadu, Pondicherry, Kerala and Karnataka held their conference in Madurai on 17-18 February which was inaugurated by CITU national secretary S. Dev Roye. Arasu placed general secretary's report which was adopted unanimously. The conference resolved to increase union's membership, conduct agitation to save public sector and for early wage negotiation. The conference elected G. Sukumaran as hon. president, K. Arasu as president and Rajagopal as its general secretary. *(Inputs: K. C. Gopikumar)*

CPSU - BHEL

CITU Unions Rejected 10 Years Wage Agreement;

Strike in BHEL - Trichy

Battle between the management and workers in BHEL is now for a 5 years wage agreement replacing 10 years wage agreement, which is to the detriment of workers particularly to the young workers. On this issue, led by CITU union, overwhelming majority of the present strength of 2300 workers in BHEL – Trichy plant were on a day's strike on 28 February emphatically rejecting the 10 years new agreement signed by some unions.

Six months before the expiry of wage agreement 2007 on 31 December, 2016; CITU unions conducted opinion survey among the workers who overwhelmingly opted for 5 years wage agreement. Accordingly, CITU union prepared a charter of demands for a 5 years wage agreement. CITU union of BHEL – Trichy submitted this charter of demands in a procession and mass deputation of 450 workers to the Trichy plant's executive director.

However, the BHEL corporate management delayed holding wage negotiation for more than 1.5 years. Subsequently, after several sittings of the wage revision JCM, the management succeeded to impose a 10 years wage agreement again on 10 January 2019 signed by INTUC, HMS, LPF and independent unions betraying the cause of the BHEL workers. CITU, AITUC, ATP and BAPSU unions refused to sign and rejected the new 10 years wage agreement. Those unions, which rejected the new 10 years wage agreement formed

a joint action committee and resorted joint agitation including organizing rally, demonstrations and daylong fast.

Based on the resolution of 12 February meeting of All India BHEL Coordination Committee, CITU union of BHEL-Trichy served strike notice for a day's strike on 28 February, 2019 pursuing four point demands for - withdrawal of 10 years new wage agreement, introduction 5 years wage agreement; renegotiation of wage agreement on the basis of the charter of demands and recognition of the workers right of collective bargaining.

Only CITU union BHEL – Trichy gave call for strike on 28 February and staged demonstration. CITU unions in all other BHEL units staged demonstration on these demands.

Quotes

Hallmark of Modi Government-Fudging the Data

“The attacks by the Narendra Modi government on many of India’s institutions have been noted, but the destruction of India’s statistical system was not adequately recognized or condemned”. (*Jayati Ghose, Professor, JNU*)

“Two top functionaries of the National Statistical Commission (NSC) resigning in protest over the NSSO (National Sample Survey Organisation) withholding its new employment survey adds to a growing list of government interventions in data releases. There is a common theme – the government is seen to take an adversarial stance when confronted with datasets that are uncharitable regarding its performance.” (*Editorial, Indian Express, 31 January, 2019*)

“The list of such transgressions is long, and gets longer daily. The messing up of the new series of GDP data became evident when the much-delayed back series was sought to be manipulated for the purpose of showing the current government in better light than the previous one.” (*Jayati Ghose*)

“NITI Aayog had shepherd the much-delayed release of the GDP back series data after a change in the base year from 2004-05 to 2011-12”. “Central Statistical Office, under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, had trimmed the average growth during UPA years and showed higher growth in the four years of the BJP-led government. This ran counter to what an NSC-appointed committee had, just three months earlier reported for the period 2004-05 to 20013-14. A fresh twist to the controversy came over the revelation that over two years earlier, the CSO had finalized back-series data for GDP that had showed higher growth rates for UPA years. But NITI Aayog did not permit its release then.” (*Indian Express*)

“Various other data are simply withheld or sought to be massaged before their official release, from the government’s own reports about the status of the Clean Ganga campaign to the actual results of initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or the Ujjwala Yojana or the rural electrification campaign.” (*Jayati Ghose*)

“One such desperate attempt was that of using the payroll registrations under the Employment Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) as indicative of new employment. As the director of the EPFO clarified himself, this is wrong for several reasons and does not give an idea of either new employment generation or even the number of formal jobs.” (*Jayati Ghose*)

“Even the data on the supposedly transparent MGNREGA website contains a fudge that hides the extent to which the government is not providing work even when it is formally demanded) (*Jayati Ghose*)

“As Nobel prize winner British economist Ronald Harry Coase said, ‘If you torture data long enough, it will confess to anything’. From India’s perspective, repeated interventions in data releases run the risk of denting the market’s trust in official data released by the government agencies.” (*Indian Express*)

“A group of 108 economists and social scientists recently released a joint statement on ‘political interference’ in statistical data, which said the government is attempting to ‘suppress uncomfortable data’. (*The Wire*)

STATES

West Bengal

Despite Police - Goons Terror **Massive Statewide Strike of Jute Mill Workers**

Despite police and TMC goons terror to prevent and break strike, more than 2 lakh workers, irrespective of their unions' affiliation, including contract and casual workers, in all 46 operational jute mills across the state stood resolutely and resorted to a day's successful strike on 15 March in response to the joint call of 10 unions in jute industry in West Bengal - BCMU, AIJWF, FCMU, AIFJW, BPCMU, PBCMF, BJMWU, JTWU and BCMM - bringing the entire jute industry to a grinding halt. The strike was in protest against the government's betrayal and against an attempt to impose a pro-employers settlement.

Out of total 46 operational jute mills in the state, workers were on total strike in 28 mills and partially, with majority participation, in rest 18 mills. On strike day, the workers remained at the gate - picketing, staging demonstration and holding meetings.

INTUC, HMS, BMS unions, with some other unions, went along the ruling party TMC's union accepting the imposed settlement and opposing the strike; exposing an alliance of TMC-BJP-Congress led trade unions against the jute workers interest in West Bengal.

This strike was the culmination of long drawn struggle of the jute workers of all 21 unions in the state pursuing their 9 point charter of demands inter alia demanding Rs.18000 as minimum wage; dearness allowance @ Rs 2.50 / per point; Rs.6000 as pension; same wage for same and similar work for the contract and badli workers; regularisation of all Badli and special Badli workers; immediate payment of long accumulated statutory dues of the retired workers on account of PF and gratuity with a guarantee for non-occurrence of such statutory dues in future; clearance of all dues of the employers on account of ESI resulting denial of ESI benefits to the workers; introduction of grade and scale in respect of wages/salary; regularization of all contract workers etc.

As the government failed to respond, all unions served notice of indefinite strike which was to commence from 15 March. The state government convened tripartite meeting on 26 February, assured that a tripartite settlement would take place at the earliest and requested the unions to defer the strike. The unions jointly decided to defer the indefinite strike till 15 March and declared to resort to indefinite strike on and from 15 March unless an acceptable settlement was signed till then.

In a tripartite meeting, held on 13 March, the government tried to impose a wage settlement with a meager rise of Rs.2 only ignoring rest of the demands. Rejecting the deceitful settlement and for ignoring other demands and failure to implement 2015 settlement provisions; 10 unions refused to sign the settlement on 13 March and gave call for a day's strike on 15 March.

Immediately after announcement of unions' strike decision, TMC goons and their puppet unions started terrorizing the workers in the jute mill areas. The leadership of CITU and its union, BCMU, visited the workers at jute mills and workers' residential areas to stand with them and campaigning for the strike. Thousands of workers in all 46 jute mills courageously resisted the threat and intimidation by the police and TMC goons and made this strike total. At many places police, along with the miscreants of the puppet unions and the ruling party, forcibly tried to open the mill gates. But, the workers remained on strike giving them a befitting reply.

The leaders of the striking joint trade unions greeted all jute mill workers for making this strike successful and declared to intensify struggle jointly in days to come to pursue the just demands of the jute workers in West Bengal.

CITU's Support & Solidarity with Striking Jute Workers

CITU all India centre, immediately on 26 February, extended full support and solidarity with the proposed joint indefinite strike by about 2.5 lakh jute workers in the state to press for their 9 point demands mostly relating to implementation of labour laws and of 2015 tripartite agreement.

Under patronage of Trinamool Congress (TMC) state government, the jute barons resorted to rampant violation of the agreement; indiscriminate and unlawful retrenchment/lay-off of the workers; mass scale contractorisation while forcing regular workers out of the mills with the help of local TMC goons; nonpayment of statutory dues to retired workers like PF, gratuity; nonpayment of overdue dearness allowance to workers etc.

Reiterating its support and solidarity to the struggle of the jute mill workers in West Bengal, CITU called upon the entire trade union movement, irrespective of affiliations, and the working class in general to stand by the struggling jute mill workers of West Bengal and organize solidarity programmes in support of the striking workers.

Municipal Workers Conference

9th conference of All Bengal Municipal Workmen's Federation was held at Malda Town on 23-24 February attended by 300 delegates from 20 districts of West Bengal. Inaugurating the conference CITU national vice president Shyamal Chakravorty explained the present situation and emphasized on the need of much bigger and broader movement to fight against anti-worker and anti-people policies of both, BJP led central government and TMC led state government, and need to defeat both.

Dipak Mitra placed general secretary's report highlighting the issues and demands of workers, the movement and on organisation. 37 delegates participated in the discussion including 7 women and 6 safai Karamcharis. 13 resolutions were adopted.

The conference elected a 203 member state council, 93 member working committee and 37 office bearers, having 10% seats each for women and safai karmacharis, with Phool Kundu as president Dipak Mitra as general secretary.

On this occasion more than 1000 strong colourful procession of municipal workers were brought out parading on the streets of the town.

Centenary Celebration of WBMOA

The state government employees of West Bengal celebrated the centenary of their organisation at the University Institute Hall in Kolkata on February 21, 2019. West Bengal Ministerial Officer's Association (WBMOA) was established 100 years before in 1920, when the first central trade union was formed in the country during British rule.

Inaugurating the celebration meeting, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen said the government employees and workers movement are two parts of the same struggle. The message of their hundred years' glorious struggles during British rule and in post independence period need to be spread among the struggling working class of the country. Well known scientist Subimal Sen said there is urgent need to unitedly challenge the growing spread of communalism. CITU state

general secretary Anadi Sahoo said that the big challenge before the working class is to fight against the imposition of anti-people policies and anti-workers labour laws. These have to be fought overcoming all intimidations and threats, unitedly by all sections of the working people.

West Bengal Government Employees Association general secretary Sukhendu Kundu said that situation of the employees have become precarious; there is no recruitment of regular employees; contract workers are deprived of minimum working conditions; accumulated DA dues are increasing; raising any issue regarding these leads to transfer and victimisation.

Common inheritor of the organisation and the movement, Bangladesh Government Employees Coordination Committee general secretary Nomanuzal Azad Aman said that 15 lakh government employees in Bangladesh has also been experiencing similar situation; social and economic disparities are growing and the burden is being imposed on the working people; their rights are being curbed, work is being outsourced and unemployment is increasing. Other leaders of Bangladesh government employees - M. A. Hannan, Mozammel Haque, Selim Bhuinya and others - were also present.

Debala Mukherjee, Chitta Gupta and Manindra Maity were in the presidium. Earlier, a colourful procession was brought out from the organization's centre at Surya Sen Street culminating at meeting venue in College Street. (*Courtesy: Ganashakti*)

Delhi - NCR

CITU 16th Delhi-NCR State Conference

16th Delhi-NCR triennial state conference of CITU was held at Ghaziabad on 17-18 March attended by 219 delegates. Inaugurating the conference CITU general secretary Tapan Sen said about the significance of 8-9 January 2 days strike, of workers charter for an alternative and on the need to defeat BJP in 17th Lok Sabha election. Reception committee chairman Rajeev Ray welcomed the delegates.

CITU national leaders A. R. Sindhu and M. L. Malkotia also addressed the open session. Leaders of fraternal organisations, who greeted conference, include Ashok Agrawal of AILU, Maimuna Mollah of AIDWA, Santosh of AICCTU, Rajeev Kanwar of Delhi Democratic Front, Nathu Prasad of DSMM, Ashoke Tiwary of Jan Natya Manch, Vikram Singh of AIAWU and others.

Anurag Saxena placed general secretary's report with 3 years review of activities and next 3 years tasks on movement and on organisation. 32 delegates participated in the discussion. After reply, the report was adopted unanimously.

The conference adopted several resolutions - on minimum wage, enforcement labour and social security laws, against increasing contractorisation, price rise; threats of imperialism, communalism and casteism; against exploitation of women; the issues of street vendors and other different unorganised sector workers, construction workers, scheme workers; issues of peasants etc.

The conference elected a 47 member state committee (including 3 vacancies for future cooption) which, in turn, elected 15 office bearers with Virendra Gaud as the president and Anurag Saxena as the general secretary.

Sindhu summed up the conference which concluded with clarion call to intensify struggle and to widen the membership and the organisation.

Tamilnadu

Agitations

Statewide Protest against attack on Trade Union Rights & Victimisation

Against victimisation of workers and attack on their trade union rights in Chemplast, Royal Enfield, Pricol and Vengerlite; CITU state committee gave call for statewide workers protest on 21 February. Chemplast at Mettur-Salem dismissed 99 interns for participation in the all India general strike on 8-9 January; Royal Enfield transferred office bearers of the newly formed union; and Pricol dismissed 302 workers in Coimbatore.

Protest demonstrations were staged in 26 districts joined by 3757 workers including 353 women; 28 flex boards were displayed, 1600 posters were pasted and 17000 leaflets were distributed. CITU Salem district committee organised a day long dharna before the collectorate joined by 600 workers.

Demonstration against Closure of Fireworks & Crackers Industry

The Supreme Court's order on fireworks on pollution ground led to closure of fireworks factories, workshops and many ancillary industries in Tamilnadu and about one lakh workers losing their livelihood. CITU has been conducting series of agitation to save workers livelihood. Its district committee staged demonstration, opened 'gruel pot' at city centre as a form of protest and the state committee also raised this issue for statewide protest on 21 February.

Demonstration by Beedi workers

Responding to the call of Tamilnadu Beedi Workers Federation, beedi workers staged demonstration before the district collectors at Vellore, Tirunelveli, Chennai North and Erode on 13 February protesting against GST on beedi and demanding Rs.3000 as pension, ID cards to all workers irrespective of gender, adequate funds to welfare board, sufficient incentives to build houses and on other legitimate demands.

Textile workers agitation

In response to Tamilnadu Textile Workers Federation call, textile workers staged demonstration in the district headquarters of Coimbatore, Erode Tirupur, Karur, Salem, Dharmapuri, Kanyakumari, Nellai, Virudhunagar, Dindigul and Theni demanding of the the state government to initiate wage negotiations for textile workers, to stop exploitation and for safety of women workers, to scrap the camp coolie & Sumangali schemes.

Agitation to withdraw the hike in insurance fee for autos

More than 3000 auto workers joined Tamilnadu Auto Workers Federation led statewide demonstrations on 15 February against the hike of insurance premium for autos. During 1973-2012 in insurance premium was only Rs.1633. After that insurance premium is spiraling – in 2013 - Rs. 3053; in 2015 - Rs.4475. in 2018 - Rs.7632 and in 2019 BJP's Modi government increased it to Rs.1,2500.

Demonstration by Powerloom Workers

Responding to call of statewide agitation, power loom workers staged demonstration in district headquarters of Coimbatore, Tirupur, Salem, Dharmapuri, Namakkal, Tiruvallur, Theni and Nellai 26 February demanding Rs.18000 as minimum wage, Rs.6000 as pension, overtime wage, implementation of labour laws, etc.

(Inputs: K. C. Gopikumar)

INTERNATIONAL

Workers Convention

Against US and Its Allies Aggression; and In Solidarity with the People of Venezuela

In the background of increasing aggression by US and its allies on Venezuela for a regime change of the Left government of President Nicolas Maduro, recently elected with overwhelming mandate of the people of Venezuela; WFTU affiliated central trade unions in India - CITU, AITUC, AIUTUC, AICCTU, UTUC, TUCC - and federations - AISGEF, BSNLEU, CCGEW, AIEA and BEFI – jointly held a “*Workers Convention in Solidarity with the People of Venezuela against the Imperialist Aggression*” in the packed auditorium at BTR Bhavan in New Delhi on 19 March 2019.

The convention presidium comprised of Swadesh Dev Roye, national secretary of CITU and dy. general secretary of WFTU; B V Vijayalakshmi (AITUC); Santosh Roy (AICCTU) and M Chaurasia (AIUTUC). The convention was addressed by national general secretaries of AITUC Amarjeet Kaur, of CITU Tapan Sen and of AICCTU Rajeev Dimri; and by R K Sharma from AIUTUC.

Addressing the convention, the speakers narrated the present development and US intervention in Venezuela; imperialist character of present aggression in the stage of neoliberal attack of international finance capital; history of repeated US intervention, including armed intervention, to destabilize the Latin American countries and take control over their natural resources like that of oil in Venezuela.

The convention adopted a resolution expressing solidarity of the working class of India with the people of Venezuela and condemning imperialist aggression on the people of Venezuela by US and its allies. The convention denounced BJP led Modi government for deviating from India’s established foreign policy by refusing to categorically come out in defence of Venezuela’s sovereignty and right of its people to decide about their political leadership. India’s own national interest, in importing oil from Venezuela, is coming under strain due to US sanctions.

The convention demanded of the Government of India to reiterate its cherished foreign policy of long standing friendship and mutual co-operation with the Venezuelan people; and not to succumb to US President Donald Trump’s calls against Venezuela.

Convention appealed to the Indian working class and its patriotic people for mass mobilization in support of the people of Venezuela.

A delegation of WFTU affiliates met the newly appointed Ambassador of Venezuela Ms. Coromoto Godoy on 22 March and handed over the resolution.

RESOLUTION

We, the class oriented trade unions in India affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) representing the overwhelming multitudes of the Indian Working Class in this convention held on 19 March 2019, at BTR Bhawan, New Delhi, firmly and unequivocally

- Condemn US-led imperialist aggression in the internal matter of Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela scuttling the sovereign rights of the people of Venezuela, continuing its criminal tradition of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries
- Declare that the planned campaign and action by the US and its allies against the democratically elected Maduro government, creating dual power in the country is totally against the 'Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations'. It is not only illegitimate, uncalled for and undemocratic but also the part of a strategy of creating a situation of civil war endangering the sovereignty of Venezuela to pursue the imperialist economic interests.
- Recall that USA in 2002 also tried a coup against the mass leader Hugo Chavez and continued to impose inhuman economic sanctions.
- Condemn the acts of USA freezing \$7 billion of Venezuelan state oil company's (PDVSA) assets and giving access to the Venezuelan state assets to the UK, blocking the legitimately elected Maduro government from withdrawing \$ 1.2 billion worth of gold deposited in the Bank of England which are brazen violation of international laws.
- Denounce the attitude of the Modi Government deviating from India's most popular foreign policy, refusing to come out categorically in defence of Venezuela's sovereignty and the right of its own people to decide their political leadership. Further, India's own national interest in bringing oil from Venezuela is coming under severe strain due to US sanctions.
- Demands the government of India must reiterate its long cherished policy of long standing friendship and mutual co-operation with the Venezuelan people, and not to succumb to the pressure of Donald Trump's calls against Venezuela.
- Firmly believe that the imperialist efforts in Venezuela will be foiled by the people and the working class of Venezuela and congratulate them for bravely fighting the imperialist aggression defending the sovereignty of the country and the democratically elected President Maduro.
- We denounce and condemn the biased and prejudiced coverage by the international and Indian media with misleading stories to support the group rival to the elected Bolivarian Government of Republic of Venezuela. This actually helps the imperialist forces to destabilize the elected governments in various parts of the world, which has been witnessed even in earlier times.

Finally, the Convention appeals to the Indian working class and the patriotic people of the country to mobilize mass of the people in support of the people of Venezuela.

On behalf of Indian Working Class

AITUC, CITU, AIUTUC, AICCTU, TUCC, UTUC

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

State	Centre	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	State	Centre	Dec 2018	Jan 2019
AP	GUNTUR	284	288	MHR	MUMBAI	297	300
	VIJAYWADA	288	292		NAGPUR	362	383
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	289	292		NASIK	336	353
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	269	272		PUNE	320	330
	GUWAHATI	261	271		SHOLAPUR	315	320
	LABAC SILCHAR	268	268	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	317	327
	MARIANI JORHAT	253	256		ROURKELA	309	307
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	249	248	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	310	311
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	328	336	PUN	AMRITSAR	314	327
CHD	CHANDIGARH	301	305		JALANDHAR	312	318
CHS	BHILAI	322	323		LUDHIANA	287	289
DLI	DELHI	283	292	RJN	AJMER	278	284
GOA	GOA	319	325		BHILWARA	281	281
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	280	278		JAIPUR	285	297
	BHAVNAGAR	293	294	TN	CHENNAI	274	279
	RAJKOT	289	295		COIMBATORE	280	286
	SURAT	266	266		COONOR	315	325
	VADODARA	270	272		MADURAI	287	291
HRY	FARIDABAD	271	270		SALEM	289	292
	YAMUNANAGAR	288	290		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	290	298
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	265	266	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	311	319
J&K	SRINAGAR	270	273		HYDERABAD	255	257
JRK	BOKARO	292	294		WARRANGAL	308	314
	GIRIDIH	329	340	TRP	TRIPURA	259	259
	JAMSHEDPUR	346	348	UP	AGRA	344	348
	JHARIA	345	358		GHAZIABAD	321	332
	KODARMA	372	380		KANPUR	323	333
	RANCHI HATIA	364	375		LUCKNOW	315	325
KNT	BELGAUM	299	304		VARANASI	314	322
	BENGLURU	293	294	WB	ASANSOL	325	329
	HUBLI DHARWAR	318	323		DARJEELING	277	273
	MERCARA	306	309		DURGAPUR	320	322
	MYSORE	305	311		HALDIA	329	335
KRL	ERNAKULAM	308	314		HOWRAH	280	278
	MUNDAKKAYAM	305	309		JALPAIGURI	279	277
	QUILON	349	362		KOLKATA	283	284
MP	BHOPAL	313	322		RANIGANJ	279	289
	CHHINDWARA	292	297		SILIGURI	273	269
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Mazdoor - Kisan Adhikar Yatra in Assam

Assam state committees of CITU and AIKS organised statewide joint Adhikar Yatra programme starting on 26 February and ending on 7 March raising workers, peasants and people's national and state issues and giving call to defeat BJP.



Section of Adhikar Yatra at Chabua in Dibrugarh district

16th CITU Delhi – NCR State Conference

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Indian Workers in Solidarity with Venezuela

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International Women's Day Meeting

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CITU President K. Hemalata addressing meeting at Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh)