



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

Delhi Communal Violence

(Report page 8)



And

The Protests in



Delhi



Punjab

Solidarity & Relief to Delhi Riot Victims

(Report page 9)

Brinda Karat, Anurag Saxena, others meeting riot victim in hospital



Tapan Sen handing over cheques to next of kin of those killed in riot



WORKING CLASS

APRIL 2020

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Break Covid19 Chain**Establish 'The Working Class' Chain**

Due to sudden countrywide lockdown to break chain of Covid19 pandemic; CITU central office, printing press, postal offices and all transport services were also under lockdown. As such, we could not print and dispatch any of the CITU centre's journals including *The Working Class*, April 2020 issue. We do not know as to when we shall be able to resume normal activities at CITU centre and for its journals.

But, we felt the necessity of continued communication and dissemination of information, as wide as possible, among the workers and other toiling sections at this unprecedented situation created by Covid19 pandemic and government's actions. CITU journals are the important source of information for dissemination.

Union government invoked Disaster Management Act 2005 for countrywide lockdown with sweeping emergency power with the National Disaster Management Authority, with the Prime Minister as its chairperson, to punish any person/institution in case of violation of its order; compelling States to follow each directive and censorship on the media, if necessary. It will have long-term implication in post-lockdown period.

We have seen the huge impact on the lives and livelihood of millions migrant workers and other marginalized sections due to the lockdown. The situation in future is unknown. But, one fact is sure that it would not be *status quo ante* after the lockdown is lifted and Corona is defeated. This situation is going to create unprecedented crisis for the entire working class and other toiling sections with huge economic burden on them in post-lockdown, post-Corona for long time to come. We have to prepare ourselves for that.

At CITU centre, we have decided to keep our communication channel open with the workers and toiling people, to the extent possible, through our journals in PDF in social media. Hence, this is the delayed publication of *The Working Class*, April 2020 issue in PDF. Please forward it to others. There will not be printed publication of *The Working Class* April 2020.

Concluding Programme of CITU's Golden Jubilee & Other Meetings

- The concluding programme of Golden Jubilee celebrating of CITU will be held on 30 May 2020 at Kolkata. All CITU General Council (GC) members will participate.
- The GC tier of AICCWW (CITU) will be held from 10 AM on 30 May 2020 at Kolkata.
- The General Council Meeting of CITU will be held on 31 May - 2 June 2020 at Kolkata.

Notice

27 February, 2020

CITU General Council meeting

- Date & Time: 31 May; 10 AM — 2 June 2020; 2.30PM
- Kolkata (Exact venue will be communicated later)
- Agenda:
 - (1) Presidential Address; (2) General Secretary's Report; (3) Review of 16th Conference of CITU and the tasks adopted by the Conference;
 - (4) Future Course of movements and activities, both Joint and Independent; (5) Any other issues with the permission of Chair.
- Delegate fee: Rs. 1200 each;
- Contact:
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Tapan Sen
General Secretary

50 years of CITU

Has the Working Class Anything to Do with Politics

K. Hemalata

The country wide general strike on 8 January 2020 saw larger participation of working people than ever before. Not only the workers in towns and cities but the working people in the rural areas, peasants, agricultural workers, artisans and others, including fishers, actively campaigned and participated in the strike. This has not happened for any strike before.

This was because the 'Declaration' adopted in the national open mass convention of workers organised on 30th September 2019, raised several issues of concern to the other sections of people also. One of them was the 'more undemocratically than ever' functioning of the BJP government led by Modi. The Declaration specifically mentioned the amendments to the Right to Information Act, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, and the attempts preparation of National Register of Citizens (NRC) for the entire country. The national convention declared that 'This ongoing destructive process must be combated for the unity of the people'. The general strike was the trade union response for combating these destructive measures to protect unity of the people.

By the time of the general strike the BJP government has passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and was in the process of preparing for an NRC for the entire country. The country erupted in protests and CITU and some other trade unions, in line with the Declaration, campaigned demanding repeal of CAA. This was widely appreciated by large sections of workers and the common people. In many parts of the country, those protesting against the CAA supported the general strike and joined the demonstrations, road and rail blockades along with the workers.

However, the review of the general strike revealed that some workers, particularly in the organised sector including members of unions led by us, opposed raising CAA issue in the campaign. They argued that it was a political demand; it has nothing to do with the workers. Some trade unions also have expressed reservations in associating themselves with such political demands.

This is not the first time that some sections of workers or even some trade unions raise objections to 'political' demands being raised from trade union platforms. In the initial stages of the joint trade union movement, some trade unions opposed even raising the issue of privatisation on the same pretext, that it was a political demand.

There are two issues here. One, are the CAA and related National Population Register (NPR) and NRC not related to workers? Second, should 'political' issues be of no concern to workers and their trade unions?

The BJP government aimed the CAA/NRC to serve its divisive agenda and polarise society on communal lines. It is now clear that the issue of CAA/NPR/NRC is not something that concerns only Muslim minorities. It is against the basic tenets of Indian Constitution. They mainly impact the poor including the poor workers, unorganised workers, particularly the migrant workers, women etc. In Assam, majority of people who have been excluded in the NRC were Hindus; around 70% of

those who have been excluded are reported to be women. Hence, CAA/NPR/NRC process is very much of concern to the workers.

Certainly, CAA/NPR/NRC is a political issue. But can any organisation of the workers keep itself aloof from fighting against it when large sections of workers are threatened with losing their identity as citizens of the country in which they were born, brought up and spent all their lives? When sections of workers are discriminated and threatened of losing their citizenship, just on the basis of their religion? When they have to show the documents that they never had, that they cannot generate, to prove that they are children of their parents? You may have fifteen other documents, but they are useless, if you don't have documents to prove this. Is it not the responsibility of the working class and their unions to stand by them and fight to protect the interests of these workers?

As a class oriented trade union, CITU is committed to unite the entire working class to fight not only for their workplace rights but for their democratic and human rights as well. CITU's constitution mandates that it fight against discrimination based on caste, gender and religion etc and for the protection of the democratic rights of the workers and of the people. It also believes that the work place rights of the workers are not unrelated to their basic democratic rights. Workplace rights and democratic rights are affected by the policies of the government. Government policies are determined by the politics of the party that is in power. The support or opposition of other political parties to these policies indicate their attitude to the issues of the working people.

This was glaringly visible when the amendments to the Code on Wages Bill proposed by Elamaram Karim, a member of Rajya Sabha and who is also a national secretary of CITU could get only 8 votes. Karim proposed some amendments which reflected the demands of the entire trade union movement. But, in addition to the Left parties, which had 6 members in the Rajya Sabha, only 2 others, one the general secretary of LPF, one of the constituents of the joint trade union platform who represented DMK and another from SP supported the amendment. It is to be noted that no other party, except the Left, take any interest when the burning issues of the workers are raised in the Parliament. It is not surprising when the reality is that most of the Parliament members are *crorepatis* and many of them have business interests and links with the big business.

If the working class does not understand this link between politics and policies, it is bound to confine itself to making submissions to the MPs and Ministers, giving memoranda and representations to them, or at best taking up some token protest programmes. Failure to understand the class character of the parties in power at the centre or in most of the states, failure to remember that these parties represent the interests of the big corporates and business, is one of the important reasons for routinism and ritualistic actions by the trade unions. When routine struggles do not yield results, then the leadership becomes frustrated; workers get frustrated or blame the trade unions. A tendency develops to swing to the extremes - either reluctance to go for any action or talking about actions like indefinite general strikes. When large masses of workers remain outside the purview of any central trade union, when the working class is not yet fully united as a class, when the workers are not politically conscious and organisationally prepared, is it possible to go for indefinite country wide general strike? Obviously those advocating indefinite general strike but want to keep the workers away from political understanding, are either too naive or consciously misleading the workers.

Such frustration seen among some trade unions and workers can be overcome only when the mass of workers understand the real cause for their problems; that it is the policies pursued by the parties which come to power with people's votes but formulate policies that benefit the exploiters of the workers and common people.

It is only through such an understanding that trade unions and workers will be able to formulate effective strategies to counter the attacks on their livelihood and working conditions. Addressing the symptoms for a deep rooted disease is not enough. It cannot provide lasting relief to the patient. The disease needs to be diagnosed and eradicated from its roots.

But, some major unions in some sectors, including those being targeted for privatisation, those where the workers are being attacked in terms of increasing contractorisation, outsourcing, deprival of trade union rights etc, are averse to develop such understanding among their members. On the pretext of being non political, they do not take initiative to develop such awareness among their members. Neither do they take initiative to unite the entire workforce in the sector, mobilise them into united struggles and create confidence in their united strength. They create and develop the illusion that it is the leaders who can deal with everything; leave to the leaders; keep the workers in the dark.

In contrast to such tendencies, CITU, which was born fifty years ago with the slogan 'Unity and Struggle', emphasises the need for the workers to understand the root cause of their exploitation, the root causes for their everyday problems, for their deteriorating conditions under the neoliberal regime. It firmly believes that only when the workers and other sections of the toiling people, who produce the wealth of the country realise this and unite and fight, can they end exploitation.

In his concluding address in the foundation conference of CITU, BT Ranadive, its founder president said, "We are starting a new organisation with a new line. We wish to give a new orientation to the trade union movement. But for that all the leaders of the trade union movement must be determined to give up the old consciousness and the old practice; then alone will we be able to carry in the concrete, a correct struggle against the reformist line of all others. And what is our struggle? We have already stated that our struggle is struggle for the unity of the working class, unity of the trade union movement. That unity should extend to all workers.'

These words are as relevant for our work today as they were five decades ago. When we celebrate the Golden Jubilee year of the formation of CITU, we must keep the importance of 'reaching the unreached' and 'linking up issues with policies and expose the politics that guide the policies' to create such awareness among the working class.

CITU Condemned Excise Duty Hike on Petroleum Products

In a statement on 14 March 2020 CITU condemned Modi government for imposing 'special excise duty', by a notification issued earlier on the same day, hiked by Rs.2 - Rs.8 on petrol and to Rs.4 on diesel per litre; thus, excise duty on petrol becoming Rs.22.98 and on diesel Rs.18.83 per litre. Simultaneously, the road cess on petrol has also been raised by Rs.1 per litre each on petrol and diesel becoming Rs.10 total. Tax on petrol was Rs.9.48 and on diesel Rs.3.56 per litre when the Modi government took office in 2014.

When international oil prices are falling to unprecedented low, the prices of petrol and diesel should have been reduced. Instead, ignoring peoples' suffering due to severe economic crisis and corona-virus impact; Modi government mopped up Rs.43,000 crore to off-set its fiscal deficit due to its pro-corporate largesse.

CITU demanded rollback of excise duties hikes and pass on all gains to the people by reducing the prices of all petroleum products due to the falling international oil prices. CITU called upon its units and unions to strongly protest against this heinous crime of Modi regime.

Communal Riot in Delhi

CITU's Protest & Relief Work

The BJP-RSS engineered communal violence in North East Delhi in February 2020 led to the loss of 53 lives, serious injuries to over 500 persons, extensive destruction and looting of houses and properties, and loss of livelihood of many. Most of the riot-victims are unorganized sector workers, many amongst them are migrant workers.

Protests

CITU and other organisations in Delhi staged protest rally in front of the Parliament at Jantar Mantar on 26 February demanding immediate and effective intervention by the police, directly under the Union Home Ministry in Delhi; to prevent the riot, arrest of the culprit BJP leaders in Delhi whose provoking statements are responsible for this riot in Delhi.

Protests agitation, led by CITU and others, took place in several districts in Punjab. CITU's other state committees also protested and, now, are campaigning against it while collecting relief fund.

Relief and Rehabilitation Work in Delhi

CITU's Delhi state committee and other mass organisations are active constituents of *Delhi Solidarity and Relief Committee*, working in riot affected area, with prominent social workers and political leaders including Justice V Gopal Gowda, Wajahat Habibulla, Harsh Mander and Brinda Karat. CPI(M)'s Delhi state secretary K. M. Tiwari is its convener.

On 29 February, CITU gave countrywide call to the workers for contribution to relief fund and called upon its state committees, federations and unions to collect relief fund for the Delhi riot victims in priority.

The CITU centre has already deposited its first installment of Rs.3.33 lakh to this Relief and Rehabilitation Committee from the collection received so far from its state committees of West Bengal – Rs.1 lakh; Telangana – Rs.60,000; Tamilnadu – Rs.50,000; and Assam – Rs.4,920.

In its first statement of appeal, the Solidarity and Relief Committee said, *"The communal violence which has engulfed North-East Delhi has led to a tragic loss of lives, extensive destruction of livelihoods, homes and property. The areas where the violence took place have a large population comprising unorganized workers, working class and lower middle class households of both communities. Thousands have become victims of the violence in different ways. Suffering and distress are widespread in the affected areas. Urgent steps are required to provide relief, rehabilitation and legal aid for all sections of the distressed people, regardless of their religious beliefs."*

Delhi Solidarity & Relief Committee has been working tirelessly. It received materials and fund from different parts of the country. The Committee with about 150 volunteers reached out about 30,000 people in the riot affected area and conducted survey in households to assess the loss incurred due to riot.

The relief team has been providing 20 truckloads of weekly ration kits of - wheat flour, rice, sugar, salt, dal, masala, tea, soap and cooking oil - and utensils, readymade garments and dress materials (all new), gas cylinders and ovens to more than 500 families.

Many hand-carts of street vendors were burned and destroyed by the rioters. The Committee decided to purchase and hand over new hand-carts to such 50 street vendors.

The Committee also has a lawyers' team who encouraged the victim-families to file complaints with the police on the basis of which several FIRs were filed.

The Committee is also considering a long term project for the riot affected area for providing relief and rehabilitation to the riot victims.

CITU in Relief Work

"The rioters belong to no religion; the poor and working people are the affected - this was the unanimous opinion of the two mothers who lost their children - one is a Hindu and the other a Muslim, one runs a tailoring shop and other is a domestic worker. The sons - Amaan and Nitin - one of 15 years and the other of 17 years of age; one went out to buy milk for the family and the other went to buy '*chowmeen*' for his brother; - both succumbed to bullet injuries on head." "What can one say to console them, who can compensate them?" That was what a social media post of the team accompanying CITU general secretary Tapan Sen said on 18 March.

A team led by CITU general secretary and CPI(M) polit bureau member Tapan Sen with Solidarity & Relief Committee members – CITU national secretary A R Sindhu and its Delhi state general secretary Anurag Saxena; Damodran, Aman Saini and Poorva - visited large parts of riot-affected area at Seelampur, Old Mustafabad, Panchal Vihar and Karawal Nagar in North East Delhi on 18 March and provided financial aid for rehabilitation of the affected families and handed over cheques of Rs.1 lakh each to the next of kin of the 6 persons - Amaan, Nitin, Mursaleen, Hamza, Veer Bhan and Sharif Khan – whom were killed in the communal violence.

Till 20 March, total Delhi relief fund collection is more than 6.5 crore in which Kerala in 3 days statewide collection-drive collected Rs.5.34 crore.

ESIC Stops Secondary-Care Treatment in Tie-up Hospitals

In his letter of 11 March 2020, CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen demanded of the DG of ESIC to rescind its circular of 27 January 2020 stopping the presently available secondary care treatment in tie-up hospitals.

Under ESIC scheme, Insured Persons (IPs) have been availing the referral facility for secondary-care treatment at the tie-up hospitals wherever such treatment could not be provided by the ESI hospitals. *"We are receiving information especially from Rajasthan that it has been stopped vide your HQ circular dated 27.01.2020 without any such in-house medical services in ESIC Hospitals,"* Tapan Sen wrote.

"Your pious wishes of giving impetus for improving in-house medical services in ESIC Hospitals could be understandable if it is followed by any concrete measures of improving the existing facilities at the existing hospitals. But at the "impetus" stage the existing tie-up facilities should not be discontinued till the impetus is translated into actual positioning of appropriate facilities for concerned diseases." Further, all diseases cannot be covered in the ESIC hospitals. Vicinity of the hospitals to IPs is also a factor.

Till the full-fledged facilities are available in all ESIC hospital throughout the country, earlier tie-up arrangements should continue; otherwise, the IPs would lose their legitimate medical care for which they are legally entitled to as they have been contributing from their hard earned wage, Tapan Sen pointed out.

WORKING WOMEN

International Women's Day 2020

Historic Countrywide '*Jail Bharo*' by Working Women

'*Jagah hai kitni jail me teri, Dekh liya Hai aur dekhenge*' (How much space is there in your jails, we have seen and shall see), a popular slogan of protest, was turned into action by the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (AICWW) of CITU on 6 March 2020 in response to the clarion call of the 16th conference of CITU of the *Working Women's Jail Bharo* programme on the occasion of International Women's Day 2020 (8 March being Sunday) joined by thousands of working women across the sectors and the country to bring the class narrative of the exploitation and discrimination against women back into the mainstream discourse; and to bring back the legacy of International Women's Day, a day of militant struggle to claim equal rights as a part of the class and as citizens. Memoranda on the demands were sent to the Prime Minister, Labour Minister and Minister for WCD.

CITU 16th conference 'commission paper on social oppression' points out "*The ruling classes use every feudal remnant in our country, such as the caste and gender based discriminations, to advance not only their political interest, but also their economic interest. The class exploitation in our society is many times manifested in the form of social oppression in our society, intermingled in such a manner, it is difficult to separate.*" To effectively fight gender based social oppression, it is imperative to attack the class base of this exploitation. CITU has decided to take up the foremost issue of women's unpaid labour as one of the main issues of this struggle along with the issue of violence against women and the divisive CAA/NRC/NPR.

The Issues & Demands

The 7 point charter of demands of *Jail Bharo* programme are - (1) Recognise women's work; include women's unpaid work in the GDP; (2) Ensure minimum wages, equal wages for equal work for women in all sectors; (3) Implement the recommendations of the 45th ILC, related to scheme workers; (4) Strict implementation of POSH Act in all work places; (5) Take effective measures to prevent violence against women; implement Justice Verma Committee recommendations; (6) Enact Act to provide 33% reservation for women in all legislative bodies at the earliest; and (7) Withdraw the discriminatory, divisive and anti Constitutional CAA, and the NPR/ NRC process at once. The protest against the CAA/NPR/NRC was one of the highlights of this struggle taking it out of the narrative of the 'Muslim women's protest'.

The extensive preparatory campaign highlighted these demands; thousands of leaflets, which also included the local demands, were distributed. This timely call was responded by the women workers in a massive way in the background of increasing unemployment; instability in available jobs; high gender gap even in the highly paid jobs; violence against women and sexual harassment at workplace.

Widespread Militant Movement

Despite heavy rains in north India, thousands of working women courted arrest pursuing their long pending demands at around 350 places in 300 districts of 20 states.

Several state governments including Assam, Tripura, Gujarat, Punjab, Karnataka etc. tried to stop the programme and resorted to repression. In Tripura and Assam women workers faced the police, broke the barricades and courted arrest. At many places in Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Gujarat etc the protestors insisted that they be arrested. It became a problem for the administration at many places where the protestors refused to accept as 'declared arrested and released', insisting that they be taken into custody. In Sangrur district in Punjab, where CITU national secretary Usha Rani also courted arrest, the administration was compelled to take them into custody in 27 trips of buses.

Women workers from all sectors – public sector enterprises, bank and insurance, textiles and garments, factories, plantation, beedi, construction, brick kiln, Anganwadi, ASHA, Midday meal, other schemes including SSA, NCLP, NRLM etc, domestic workers, safai karmacharis, road transport, electricity, water supply, municipal bodies, self-employeds, street vendors, home based workers etc. were part of this historic struggle.

Jail Bharo in States

In national capital **Delhi**, at Jantar Mantar around a hundred women and men participated in the *Jail Bharo* agitation including CITU national secretary and its AICCWW convener A R Sindhu and treasurer M L Malkotia, its senior leader Ranjana Nirula, Anju and Savita and CITU state president Virender Gaud and state convener of AICCWW Kamala. The protestors also demanded restoration of peace in Delhi riot affected areas.

In **Punjab**, militant, massive programmes were held in 22 districts and thousands courted arrest, despite heavy rain. In many districts, the police manhandled the workers.

In **Rajasthan** the programme was held in 4 districts.

In **Haryana**, around 20,000 women workers from Anganwadi, ASHA, Mid Day Meal courted arrest in 22 districts. CITU state president Surekha courted arrest in Mewat district.

In **Himachal Pradesh**, the programme was held at block / tehsil level. Throughout the state, the programme was held in more than 20 places.

In **Jammu & Kashmir**, **Uttarakhand** and **Uttar Pradesh** meetings were held on 8 March.

In **Maharashtra**, *Jail Bharo* was held in 8 districts. In a few districts, the programme was held on 8 March. In Sholapur, thousands of women workers, especially beedi workers, participated. In Nagpur also massive *Jail Bharo* was organized.

In **Gujarat**, the government resorted to severe repression to stop the programme. In 4 districts, a day earlier, the leaders of the Anganwadi union were put under house arrest. Apprehending anger of the workers, the government hurriedly called BMS Anganwadi workers' union in a meeting and announced an increase in remuneration just prior to *Jail Bharo* programme of CITU. Then the finance minister again announced the same to stop the Anganwadi workers from participating in CITU led programme. Workers were stopped from reaching Ahmadabad where women workers from nearby districts were supposed to reach. Despite these repressions, more than 2,000 women workers assembled at Ahmadabad. They were all arrested and taken into custody. They were only released after the ongoing Assembly session was over for the day. The programme was also held in 9 districts, although in 4 districts the mobilisation was affected because of the house arrest of leaders. Those who were arrested include CITU state president Arun Mehta and other CITU state office bearers Kailash Rohit and Naseemben.

In **Madhya Pradesh**, *Jail Bharo* was held in 18 districts.

In **Chhattisgarh**, in 5 districts, including Rajnandgaon, Bhilai, Ballod, Anganwadi workers, contract workers etc courted arrest.

In **Kerala**, in massive programmes were held in all 14 districts, thousands of women

workers from different sectors marched to central government offices and public meetings were held. At Thiruvananthapuram, the women workers marched to the Raj Bhavan.

In **Karnataka**, *Jail Bhara* was conducted in 25 districts.

In **Tamil Nadu**, women workers from all sectors courted arrest in all 23 districts and at 28 places. Earlier, a statewide massive campaign was launched to mobilize the working women.

In **Telangana** *Jail Bhara* took place at 41 places in 28 districts.

In **Andhra Pradesh**, the programmes were held in all 13 districts. Thousands of workers from different sectors courted arrest and submitted memorandum.

In **Jharkhand**, the programme was held in 8 districts. Mine workers participated in massive way in the state.

In **Bihar** the programme was held in 15 districts. Women workers from Anganwadi, ASHA, MDM, Beedi etc participated.

In **Odisha**, mass courting arrest was held in 4 districts.

In **West Bengal**, a militant programme was conducted at Esplanade which was addressed by Madhumita Bandhopadhyaya, national secretary of CITU, Ratna Dutta and Gargi Chatterjee, apart from CITU state leaders. Around 2500 women workers were arrested and were released later. The programme was held in all other districts as well.

In **Tripura**, around 3000 women workers took out a rally in Agartala and, daring the police, breaking the barricades courted arrest. Panchali Bhattacharya, Jaya Barman, Kajal Rani Sarkar and others leaders were arrested. They were kept under detention and later released.

In **Assam**, *Jail Bhara* took place in 22 districts.

Some Gain Achieved

Although this struggle was on general demands of all working women, it was the scheme workers – the biggest contingent in this struggle - who got some relief out of it. In Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, the remuneration of Anganwadi workers and helpers has been increased. Punjab union of CITU was called for discussion and all demands, except for increase in remuneration, were accepted before 6 March. In Assam, the remuneration of mid day meal workers has been raised by Rs.500 per month.

Class Bias of Media

It is not surprising that the mainstream media has blacked out this struggle. Even in the social media, this class action and its importance were not highlighted or even mentioned by many who claim to be 'progressive', 'leftist' and promoting 'alternative' narratives. The sharp difference between the reaction to the class action and identity politics based actions was also very visible this time. This should be an eye opener for the working class movement.

Need of Wider Unity

In almost all states, CITU men leaders also participated in good numbers. The involvement of CITU committees in the campaign and preparations as well as in the actions was remarkable in this programme. The massive response to the call shows the anger of women workers against the anti people economic policies and the divisive agenda of the RSS led BJP government. While congratulating the women workers for the success of this historic struggle, the first one of its kind under neoliberalism, CITU has called upon the women in general and working women in particular to intensify the struggle. It is also necessary to widen the unity of the toiling people. The CITU will take the initiative to have a closer association with the women's movement and women in other class and mass organizations to take up these issues in the coming days in order to build a wider movement against the neoliberal and communal government and the present crisis ridden capitalist order.

- A. R. Sindhu



WFTU Declaration on International Women's Day

8 March 2020

On the 8th March 2020 International Women's Day anniversary, WFTU conveyed warm militant greeting to every woman all over the globe, working or unemployed, self-employed, in the city or in the countryside, young mother, student, retiree, refugee or immigrant, life fighters of the everyday. WFTU stands by the side of women's struggle for real equality.

Year 2020 also marks the 75th anniversary of the WFTU's struggle and action since its founding in 1945 fighting for the true equality of women, for a system that will free them from the double repression of their gender and class, for a system without man-to-man exploitation.

In this struggle, men and women are allies and walk side by side in social and political action, claiming a life for their families without wars and refugees, with constant and full-time work, with decent salaries and full insurance rights, with state infrastructures providing free public health, education, social welfare for all.

International Women Day is a symbol of struggle, sanctioned with the suggestion of socialist Clara Zetkin in 1911. It is a day dedicated to the strike of the New York women garment workers in 1857 demanding equal pay with their male colleagues, reduced working hours and human working conditions, and stood up to their employers and their State.

163 years later today, all these are still demanded. Job intensification has increased; flexible forms of work tend to become the norm; in many countries women are still paid less than their male colleagues for the same job.

Today, in 2020, with such development in science and technology, women still die during childbirth due to lack of medical care; they do not go to school because of their gender; become victims of trafficking and are forced into prostitution; are drowning in the sea, with their children in their arms, trying to avoid the bombs.

WFTU rejects all policies serving the large multinationals to continually increase their profits. This is the real reason behind every war, every anti-insurance law, every cut in wages and benefits, the shrinking of the social state. And finally, this is the real causality of inequality of the woman in every expression.

WFTU believes that the best way to honor International Women's Day is to continue struggles against these policies and their perpetrators until the complete emancipation of every woman in every corner of the planet.

'We will not stop until we do it!'

Women's Work in India

Jayati Ghosh

One of the difficulties with discussions on employment in India is the tendency to conflate employment and work. But employment is only that part of work that is remunerated, and in India a vast amount of work is actually unpaid and often not even socially recognised. Once we recognise that, a lot of what appears to be inexplicable about Indian employment trends becomes easier to understand.

This is especially true of women's work. There has been much discussion on the evidence from recent large sample surveys on employment, of the significant decline in women's workforce participation rates. The work participation rate of rural women aged 15+ years declined from 35 per cent in 1999-2000 to 24 per cent in 2011-12 to less than 18 per cent in 2017-18, while the rate for urban women did not change from the really low rate of around 16 per cent. Various explanations have been offered for this, from more young women being engaged in education (which is still not enough to explain the decline) to rising real wages that have allowed women in poor households to avoid or reduce involvement in very physically arduous and demanding work with relatively low wages. This assumes that women especially in poorer families do not "work" in outside employment when their family's economic conditions allow it.

But these numbers relate to recognised employment, even if it is informal or self-employment. The same survey reports also include some categories that are described as "not in the labour force". The categories that matter are Code 92 (attended to domestic duties only) and Code 93 (attended to domestic duties and also engaged in free collection of goods like vegetables, roots, firewood, cattle feed, etc., water collection, sewing, tailoring, weaving, etc. for household use) both of which heavily involve women working in unpaid ways. There is also Code 97 ("Others", including beggars, prostitutes, etc.) which is a strange anomaly because these activities do involve money transactions but are still not classified as work. If we include all these categories in the definition of work, then we get quite different results. First, instead of a really low work participation rate, more women work in India than men! For example, in 2011-12, the total women's work participation rate was as high as 86.2 per cent, compared to 79.8 per cent for men. Second, the decline over the previous decade can then be explained entirely by more women in the age group 15-24 years participating in education. Third, and most important: the decline in women's employment rates really reflects a shift from paid to unpaid work. This is a very different picture from the conventional one that sees most women in India as "not working".

Why was there such a shift? Disaggregation shows that the increase was mainly in Code 93 (domestic and allied work. This was most marked for poor women, in the bottom 40 per cent of households according to consumption expenditure. A significant share of such unpaid women workers (40 per cent in rural areas and 22 per cent in urban areas in 2011-12) were dominantly involved in fetching water for household consumption, an activity that takes more time than before. More than half of the poorest women had to do this, as well as to collect bio-fuels for cooking as they did not have access to or could not afford other fuel. This suggests that absence of basic amenities was an important factor driving the increase in unpaid work. Another NSS survey in 2012 found that in rural areas, the average trip to the water source took 20 minutes, with an additional waiting time of 15 minutes at the water source, and that several trips were required in

order to meet the water needs for household consumption. In urban areas the time for travel to the source was 15 minutes and the time spent waiting per trip was 16 minutes. Similarly, significant time was spent by women on collecting fuel-wood and fodder for animals. The Ujjwala scheme providing a free first cooking gas cylinder to BPL women is superficially successful in providing a first gas cylinder to women. But it has failed to overcome this problem, because most households have found that they cannot afford to buy the subsequent cylinders, which have become more expensive!

What is more, nearly two-thirds of these unpaid women workers reported that they had to perform these necessary tasks because there was no one else in the household to do them. Nevertheless, a significant majority said they would be willing to accept paid work, pointing to the overall inadequacy of productive employment generation in the economy.

In addition to these extended domestic tasks, there are the various activities associated with the “care economy”: care of the young, the old, the sick and the differently-abled; cooking, cleaning and generally looking after healthy adults – all of which are dominantly seen as the responsibility of women in the household. When these services are outsourced and provided commercially, the providers are seen as workers in India; but when they are performed by women within households, such women are classified as “not in the labour force”.

This lack of recognition of a significant part of the work dominantly provided by women has several important economic and social implications. The unpaid-paid continuum of women’s work serves to devalue both women and the work they do. Thus, when women do enter labour markets, their wages tend to be lower than those of men – not only because they are willing to work for lower wages but because so much of their work is available for free. India has one of the largest gender gaps in wages to be found anywhere in the world, with women’s wages on average only around two-thirds that of men’s wages.

Related to this, the occupations in which women dominate tend to be lower paid – and the wage penalty extends even to men doing similar work, such as in the low paid care sector. This is certainly true of private employers. But in India, even the government has used these gender-segmented labour markets to provide public services on the cheap, by employing anganwadi workers and helpers and ASHAs as “volunteers” who are paid only a fraction of the official minimum wages. Similarly, women are disproportionately employed by state governments as para-teachers and ANMs (auxiliary nurses and midwives) and paid far less than regular employees.

Third, all this unpaid work provides a huge subsidy to the recognised economy and to the “formal sector”, which rely both directly and indirectly on the goods and services produced by these unsung and unrewarded workers. Because this contribution is not recognised, it enables self-satisfied perceptions of rising aggregate labour productivity in the economy, which may be quite misplaced. And it means that public policy can continue to ignore the need to reduce and redistribute such unpaid labour, and can persist in the mistaken belief that GDP growth will simply generate enough “good jobs” for everyone.

(Jayati Ghosh is a renowned development economist; Chairperson of the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at the JNU, New Delhi and her core areas of study include employment patterns in developing countries, issues related to gender and development etc.)

TRIPARTITE FORUMS

EPFO

Meeting of Central Board of Trustees

Meeting of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) was held on 5 March 2020 in New Delhi. CITU was represented by its national vice president A. K. Padmanabhan. CITU wrote in advance for inclusion of several issues in the agenda for discussion including the issues of pensioners; employee's date of birth and name, especially in unorganised sector, not matching with Aadhaar card; etc. However, none of these was included in the agenda.

In the meeting the workers representatives raised objection about delayed holding of CBT meeting after 6 months. The minister assured to hold it quarterly hereafter.

Workers' representatives raised number of issues, affecting the workers, including Supreme Court cases on increased pension, medical facilities to pensioners etc and also non-inclusion of suggested issues in the agenda. They pointed out that even CBT members are not getting replies or even acknowledgement from the EPFO / Govt.

Issues of pensioners: On the increase in minimum pension, the minister assured to take a CBT members deputation to the finance minister. On increased pension for higher contribution, government said that those were subjudice and Supreme Court's final decisions would be implemented.

Pensioners who commuted their pension: Prior to this meeting, long-pending notification on amendment to the commutation, which CITU has been raising during last 5 years, was issued stating that the deduction in pension of the those who availed commutation would be stopped and full pension would be paid after 15 years. There was no clarity on return of the additional / excess amounts deducted from pensioners.

In this meeting the government assured full pension will be restored after 15 years of recovery. Additional / excess amount, recovered after 15 years of deduction, would be returned to the pensioners.

On reduction of interest rate: As the government reduced the EPF interest rate of 8.5% for FY 2019-20 as against 8.65% of the last FY; the workers' representatives strongly expressed their opposition and resentment on government's policy of reduction of interest rate on investment of social security savings of the workers.

On EDLI: Earlier decision of minimum 2.5 lakhs and maximum 6 lakhs for only 2 years has now been decided to continue thereafter. The minister assured to look into the demand of increasing the minimum to 3 lakhs. There was no specific reply to the issue, raised by CITU, of loyalty payment, decided earlier but rejected by the government.

Proposal to change EPS 95: The government proposed to bring changes in EPS 95 as a 'Contribution defined Pension Scheme' for all the new comers which will have individual pension

account. This in effect converts EPS into NPS. It was proposed that minimum pension and the whole pension benefit would be decided by the government and pension would be on the basis of the pension fund available in the subscriber's account at the time of retirement.

This was stoutly opposed by CITU and other workers' representatives. The government, for now, agreed to have relooked into it.

Difficulties in online application: On the difficulties being faced by the workers in filing online applications and serious problems encountered in filings and getting reply from EPFO were raised in the meeting. EPFO said that common service centres in different areas will also have the facilities of submitting applications.

Difficulties in giving life certificate: The difficulty in giving life certificate was also raised. On this, EPFO is discussing with the banks on issuing life certificate at any time of the year with a validity of one year so that the crowding of banks in November can be avoided.

Vacancies in EPFO: With large number of vacancies in EPFO, as of now around 9000, there are problems both for the employers and subscribers. It was informed that some recruitment have been done recently.

Industrial relation: This issue in EPFO was generally raised and the minister assured to discuss with the unions.

- AKP

CITU Denounces EPF Interest Rate Cut

In a statement on 6 March 2020, CITU denounced Modi government's decision, through a meeting of CBT of EPFO held on 5 March, of EPF interest rate cut to 8.5% in FY 2019-20 from 8.65% in FY 2018-19 despite strong opposition by workers' representatives in the CBT meeting.

More than 65% of the incremental deposits in EPF has been invested in government securities. Government's policy of continuously lower the interest rate on small savings, including social security savings, led to lower earnings / return on investment of EPFO corpus.

CITU condemned such anti-worker policies of the BJP government at the Centre. The trade unions are justly demanding since long differential rate of interest on social security savings of the workers higher than the interest rate on commercial credit/deposits. But the successive governments under neoliberal regime have been continuously lowering the interest rates on social security savings of the workers and of all small savings instruments leading to huge loss of earnings of crores of workers and superannuated persons on which they survive in their old age.

Simultaneously, the same Government is so liberal in drastically reducing corporate tax rates and also tax rates on returns on speculative investments in stock market. Such policy of the government is totally discriminatory against the crores of toiling people who actually create GDP and generate revenues in the national exchequer. It is nothing but loot on crores of working people to benefit the private corporate and speculators.

CITU called upon the workers and the people to unite and fight against the neoliberal policy regime which is looting the people to benefit the private corporate and speculators, both domestic and foreign.

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Telecom

BSNL

Workers – Executives Joint Struggle For Revival of BSNL & On Employees Issues

Led by their joint platform, the All Unions and Association of BSNL (AUAB), all non-executive and executive employees resorted to countrywide hunger strike, with their massive participation at all places, on 24 February 2020 demanding expeditious implementation of the Union cabinet's revival package of BSNL and to the urgent and serious grievances of the employees.

On 23 October 2019, Union Cabinet approved a Rs.69,000 crore Revival Package for both for BSNL and MTNL which includes (i) allotment of 4G spectrum, (ii) Sovereign Guarantee for raising funds to the tune of Rs.15,000 crore (Rs.8,500 for BSNL and Rs.6,500 for MTNL) by way of issuing long term bonds; (ii) monetisation of assets and (iv) implementation of VRS. Out of these, only VRS has been implemented removing 78,569 employees, about half of the total employees strength.

Even after the lapse of nearly 4 months, 4G spectrum has not been allotted. The government has not yet issued the Sovereign Guarantee to BSNL to enable it to raise Rs.8,500 crore by way of issuing long term bonds. The process of monetisation of BSNL assets is also moving in snail space. Added to the woes of BSNL, Supreme Court's judgment on calculation of the AGR (the adjusted Gross Revenue) has caused uncertainties in the telecom sector and the banks are unwilling to extend loans to BSNL.

Due to the delay in the allotment of 4G spectrum and also due to the non-availability of funds, BSNL's 4G service is not likely to be launched even before end of December. This delay is much against Union cabinet approving the revival package of BSNL.

In this situation, BSNL is not able to improve its revenue generation; the employees are not getting salary on time and the wages of the contract workers have not been paid for the past 10 months; the deductions made from employees' salaries on account of GPF, bank loan EMI, society dues, LIC premium etc. have not been remitted by BSNL management. As a result, the employees are unable to get GPF and society loans.

BSNL Beats Private Companies in Adding New Customers

Despite the above problems, people's faith in public sector BSNL remains. Ever since entering into the telecom market in September 2016, Reliance Jio has been adding maximum number of customers every month. However, in December 2019, BSNL has beaten Reliance Jio in respect of new customers by adding more than 4.27 lakh; while Reliance Jio could add 82,000; Vodafone lost 35 lakh and Airtel lost 11,000 in December 2019.

In December 2019, all the private companies raised tariffs by 40% while BSNL has not raised its tariff.

Coal

Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill Opposed in the Parliament

On 12 March 2020, participating in the debate in Rajya Sabha on the *Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020*, proposing amendments in *Mines & Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act 1957* and the *Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015* and replacing the ordinance issued on 10 January last; CPI(M) MP from Kerala K. Somaprasad strongly opposed the Bill and said that from the beginning his Party opposed the whole exercise of handing over mineral resources of the country, coal blocks in particular, to private hands for commercial purposes.

The present Bill cannot be seen in isolation and “needs to be seen and understood along with the Government’s decision to allow 100% FDI in coal mining by private players for commercial purposes,” he said.

First, the nationalization of the coal mining was reversed by allowing private sector to mine coal and other minerals for commercial purposes, which earlier was vested with public sector Coal India Ltd to maintain balance between its household consumption and industrial consumption since coal is a basic industrial raw material for power, steel, fertilizer and other crucial industries.

Thereafter, it was thrown open to private sector for captive purposes to begin with; and later in 2015 even for commercial purposes.

Now, after allowing 100% FDI in commercial mining of coal, doors would be opened for export of coal as well, since mining in our country is the cheapest as per international standard. The present Bill is an interim step for the finality of the destructive process in making coal a hotly traded commodity in international market totally unconcerned of its requirement in the domestic economy both for household consumption and more so for industrial consumption, he said.

Electricity generation in our country is still dependent mainly on coal and coal-based thermal power occupies almost 70% of country’s total power generation. The present Bill is

aimed at attracting foreign players in coal mining with 100% control which will be disastrous in national interest, he concluded.

CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP and CITU national secretary E. Kareem demanded division of the House on the Bill. Unfortunately, the Bill was passed with only 12 votes opposing mostly belonging to Left parties.

Government’s Desperation for Foreign-Takeover of Coal and Other Mining

Same day, on 12 March, the Bill was passed by Rajya Sabha. It was already passed by Lok Sabha on 6 March. The Modi government issued a press statement on the same day which indicates the government’s desperation for foreign takeover of Indian coal and other mines.

The statement said, this Bill “will open a new era in Indian coal & mining sector specially to promote Ease of Doing Business.”

“The amended provisions clearly provide that companies which do not possess any prior coal mining experience in India and/or have mining experience in other minerals or in other countries can participate in auction of coal/lignite blocks.”

The government statement further said, "With the amendments, environment and forest clearances along with other approvals and clearances shall automatically get transferred to the new owners of mineral blocks for a period of two years from the date of grant of new lease. This will allow new owners to continue with hassle free mining operations."

Protest in Coal Mines



Protesting against the Bill Coal workers in Domohani Colliery in Sodepur Area of Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL) in West Bengal

Coal Contract Workers' Agitation

Led by CITU's one of the major coal unions, BCKU, coal contract workers and land-losers jointly staged indefinite stay-in dharna and demonstrations in front of the Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL) headquarter 'Koyala Bhavan' at Dhanbad which ended on 3rd day on 27 February after fruitful discussion and understanding reached between the management and BCKU.

The third day of agitation began with paying floral tribute to the Indian revolutionary Chandra Shekhar Azad, it being his birth day and taking pledge. The speakers addressing the agitators warned the management of intensifying the agitation in case there was no solution of their just demands including paralyzing the operation of BCCL. In the same afternoon the CMD invited the BCKU leaders for discussion. In the discussion management was headed by the CMD and BCKU was led its veteran leader and president S. K. Bakshi with its joint secretary Manas Kumar Mukherjee and other leaders including Suresh Prasad Gupta, Binda Paswan, Dhiren Mukherjee, Rajendra Paswan, Shib Kumar Singh, Chakradhar Mahto, Ram Briksdhari and others.

Several of the demands of the contract workers and land-losers were accepted by the management. These include providing medical facilities to the contract workers; High Power Committee for contract workers would be implemented; due bonus will be paid; provide all updated to the contract workers about their PF deductions and action would be taken where fund was deducted but not deposited. Since demand of pension for all contract workers is related to policy of entire CIL, the same would be taken up at that level.

Management agreed for village development near BCCL operational areas; any proposal for such development would be considered by the management for implementation.

BCKU expressed satisfaction as for the first time the CMD held discussion on contract workers issues.

LEGAL

I.R. Code Bill

Meeting with Standing Committee on Labour

For eliciting opinion of the central trade unions (CTUs) on Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour had invited written submission and oral submission on 27 February 2020 by CTUs. The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on 28 November 2019 and was referred to the Standing Committee. CITU national secretary E. Kareem MP is a member of this standing committee.

Besides the joint memorandum of all CTUs, CITU had also separately submitted its own written comments/amendments. CITU was represented by its national secretary R. Karumalaiyan in the meeting with the Standing Committee.

During oral submission, CITU again submitted its written updated proposed amendments on the I R Code Bill. In its submissions on the Bill, CITU pointed out several areas in the clause of 'definition'; about formation of 'Trade Unions' and its registration giving unbridled power to the registrar keeping applications under the carpet indefinitely and his power to cancel the registration on flimsy grounds; curbing the 'Right to Strike' and legitimizing the strike-breakers. All important anti-worker provisions/schemes sought to be legalized.

CITU drew attention of the Standing Committee to the syndrome of "as may be prescribed" infecting all through the Bill by which the political executives are hell-bent to usurp the power of the Parliament in their drive of 'Ease of Doing Business'.

Some Major Areas of Concern in I.R. Code Bill

While the contents of I. R. Code Bill is mostly a cut-and-paste exercise from the three existing labour laws, which are being repealed with the passing of the Code, the Trade Unions Act, 1926, the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947; it also contains several anti-workers / anti-trade unions provisions, some of which are enumerated below. These inter alia were taken up by CITU in their written and oral presentation before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour and at other forums related to labour.

1. In the Code, in the definition of '**Industry**' an additional provision has been made reading as "*any other activity as may be notified by the Central Government*", thus empowering the government to exclude any activity from the definition of the 'Industry'.
2. The Code excludes the '*apprentice*' from the definition of '**Worker**'.
3. Existing I. D. Act has only one definition - '**Workman**'; while the proposed I R Code has two definitions - of '**Employee**' and of '**Worker**' having common categories – '*skilled*', '*unskilled*', '*manual*', '*operational*', '*technical*' and '*clerical*' work;

But, the **‘Employee’** definition additionally has *‘semi-skilled’, ‘Supervisory’* (without wage ceiling), *‘Managerial’, ‘Administrative’* work; and *‘any other category which may be declared by the appropriate government’*; and

The **‘Worker’** definition additionally includes *‘Supervisory’* (with Rs.15,000 wage ceiling), *‘newspaper employees’* and *‘working journalists’* and *‘sales promotion employees’* for the purpose of Industrial Disputes.

4. For **‘Closure’** to seek government’s prior approval the workers minimum threshold of 100 has two additional provisions in the Code – (i) *“or such number of workers as may be notified by the appropriate Government,”* and (ii) *“where a threshold of more than one hundred workers is in force in a State under the law for the time being in force in such State immediately before the commencement of this Code, then, such threshold shall prevail.”*

5. The definition of **‘Strike’** additionally includes *“the concerted casual leave on a given day by fifty per cent or more workers employed in an industry.”*

6. Under Prohibition of Strikes and Lock-out,

Present provision in I D Act is – *“No person employed in a public utility service shall go on strike in breach of contract”*- (underline added for emphasis) *“within fourteen days of giving such notice;”* etc.

I R Code changes it as, *“No person employed in an industrial establishment shall go on strike, in breach of contract”* (underline added for emphasis) *“within fourteen days of giving such notice;”* etc.

It means that provision of 14 days advance notice, applicable only to ‘public utility service’, has been made universal for ‘all industrial establishments’ in the Code.

This 14 days compulsory advance notice will have consequential impact, virtually banning the strike as the dispute will be admitted in conciliation which further will prevent any strike during conciliation etc.

(Inputs: R. Karumalaiyan)

23 March anti CAA-NPR-NRC Rallies Deferred

16th conference of CITU had resolved to conduct door to door campaign of *‘Hum Jawab Nahin Denge’* to NPR questions among the workers at their residential and work places culminating in massive rallies on 23 March martyrdom day of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev.

However, in view of countrywide lockdowns and restriction on gatherings at this most vulnerable stage of Corona virus pandemic and the need of people’s full attention in its prevention as the top priority, CITU secretariat meeting of 14-15 March decided to defer anti CAA-NPR-NRC rallies and public meetings on 23 March to a later date, to be decided in the prevailing situation; observe the martyrdom day on 23 March in small local meetings and carry on the ongoing door to door campaign till then.

STATES

Telangana

Activities Report

Protest against Trump's Visit & Arrests



Against US President Donald Trump's visit in India, as part of countrywide protest, dharnas were held and Trump's effigy was burnt by 1,220 workers and activists of CITU, AIKS, AIAWU and AIDWA jointly in 22 districts on 24 February. 19 activists were arrested.

Protest against Central Budget

State units of central trade unions (CTUs) held joint press meet on 1 February; CITU, AITUC and central government employees' confederation jointly staged dharna at Secunderabad railway station on 25 February; after weeklong campaign by CITU protest dharnas were staged at 40 places in 16 districts; and at the joint national call of CTUs, dharnas were staged before the collectorates in 20 districts on 2 March joined by about 3000 activists.

Anti-CAA Campaign

On 30 January, Gandhiji's assassination day, public meetings and human chain programmes were organised at 164 places in 26 districts; distributed handbills on No to NPR.

Fund for Delhi Riot Victims

In the recently held CITU state general council, a call has been given for fund collection for relief to Delhi riot victims. On 1 March, in the council meeting itself, on the spot, more than Rs.38,000 was collected.

CITU Demanded

Full Refund of Tickets Cancellation Charges

CITU national office bearers' meeting, held on 14-15 March 2020 in New Delhi, in a statement demanded of the Central government full refund of air and railway tickets cancellation charges due to large scale cancellation of pre-arranged meetings and travelling in the wake of coronavirus pandemic and the Central and State governments closing institutions, activities and events; and putting restriction on travelling and gathering of the people.

Demand Raised in the Parliament

"Raising the issue in the Upper House, Elamaram Kareem (CPI-M) said several states have closed educational institutions and other places to check the spread of coronavirus. Besides, public gatherings have been cancelled. He said a large number of people have changed their travel plans and forced to cancel their air and train tickets.

The CPI-M member urged the government to intervene and ask airlines and Indian railways to forgo cancellation charges. As several other members agreed with Kareem, Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu said it was a suggestion worth considering." (*India Today*; 16.03.2020)

"Rajya Sabha chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu on Monday asked the government to consider a suggestion by CPI(M) MP Elamaram Kareem for directing the railways and airlines to forgo ticket cancellation charges in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

"This suggestion is worth considering," Mr. Naidu told the Leader of the House. "Because of the sudden closure of schools and other schedules, people are forced to cancel their programmes. So, let the airlines and the railways take note of this situation and see to it that no cancellation charges are collected. That is a suggestion by the Members. Please get it examined by the concerned Minister." (*The Hindu*; 17.03.2020)

"Amid growing demand that railways should do away with cancellation charges as more and more passengers are increasingly cancelling their tickets, the railway ministry officials have taken up this issue with the finance ministry." (*Times of India*; 17.03.2020)

**Please Forward '*The Working Class*,'
April 2020 e-copy to the unions, their
units & activists for maximum
circulation & dissemination**

Private Bank Fraud, Looting Peoples Money Continues

Even when Yes Bank was deep in crisis, looting spree of people's money, under the knowledge of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), continued. When banking sector is going through the toughest and longest crisis along with the slowing down of economy; RBI, as the highest regulator, has continuously failed in safeguarding depositors' interests. Around a month before, RBI's intervention in Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank manipulation, and Yes Bank debacle now exposed the role of RBI further.

Defying the rule book, Yes Bank kept on issuing fresh credit even when its numerous wrong doings were pointed out. The increase in loan book from Rs. 1.32 lakh crore in 2017 to Rs 2.41 lakh crore in 2019 clearly shows that RBI didn't try to stop the bank from further deterioration. The bank has issued credit to stressed companies, most of which have gone bankrupt, such as Anil Ambani Group, IL&FS, DHFL, Cox & Kings, Essel, Indiabulls Housing Finance, Jet Airways, CCD, Vodafone. The inaction of RBI is difficult to comprehend; it shows RBI's complicity and its responsibility in Yes Bank crisis. In the past, RBI had put eleven public sector banks under prompt corrective action but didn't do the same with Yes Bank.

Enforcement Directorate has now arrested the founder and former MD of Yes Bank, Rana Kapoor for his complicity and criminal negligence. But, for this debacle responsibility must be fixed beyond Rana Kapoor and all concerned persons need to be booked.

Putting the bank under restrictions for one month, RBI has issued a draft reconstruction scheme where SBI would invest and buy 49% stakes of the dying bank. SBI led consortium of banks will invest to save the private bank from collapsing by the public sector institutions.

The other fact is that Yes Bank has created a series of crisis in states as many of which had deposited very large public money - grants from Central government, money of small investors, cash compensation to farmers etc. Government of West Bengal alone poured Rs.1307 Crore collected from self help groups and issues cheques of this bank as MSP to poor peasants which obviously bounced back leaving poor peasant helpless. In addition, RBI has sent letters to chief secretaries of all state governments directing them not to transfer their deposits in Yes Bank to any public sector banks so that the private sector banks do not face any financial suffering. (*Indian Express*; 12 March 2020)

- Amitava Guha

Chennai Metro Rail's Unfair Labour Practices

At CITU's call from its 16th conference, its state committees, unions and federations wrote to the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu for his intervention in the rampant unfair labour practices being indulged by the management of public sector Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL).

For just forming a union by its employees, CMRL management dismissed all 7 office bearers of the union; suspending 9 workers pending disciplinary actions; 54 workers were charge sheeted and 9 of them were punished with annual increment stoppage for 6 years and further charge sheeting 124 workers; more than 60 workers were given notice to vacate quarters; and CMRL workers in general were also deprived of their 35% allowances; 20 days half wages leave and 15 days paternity leave.

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

State	Centre	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	State	Centre	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020
AP	GUNTUR	302	299	MHR	MUMBAI	322	319
	VIJAYWADA	306	304		NAGPUR	406	405
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	314	312		NASIK	380	377
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	301	298		PUNE	362	360
	GUWAHATI	293	292		SHOLAPUR	350	349
	LABAC SILCHAR	282	279	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	349	346
	MARIANI JORHAT	277	274		ROURKELA	335	333
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	264	261	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	332	329
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	366	358	PUN	AMRITSAR	357	357
CHD	CHANDIGARH	325	323		JALANDHAR	337	335
CHS	BHILAI	342	337		LUDHIANA	316	312
DLI	DELHI	314	311	RJN	AJMER	299	299
GOA	GOA	345	340		BHILWARA	308	303
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	295	292		JAIPUR	326	324
	BHAVNAGAR	307	311	TN	CHENNAI	292	289
	RAJKOT	312	310		COIMBATORE	303	301
	SURAT	285	279		COONOR	350	347
	VADODARA	290	289		MADURAI	321	319
HRY	FARIDABAD	292	289		SALEM	310	306
	YAMUNANAGAR	315	314		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	331	325
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	282	280	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	348	345
J&K	SRINAGAR	301	299		HYDERABAD	275	275
JRK	BOKARO	318	313		WARRANGAL	332	330
	GIRIDIH	366	359	TRP	TRIPURA	278	272
	JAMSHEDPUR	381	378	UP	AGRA	382	377
	JHARIA	377	375		GHAZIABAD	350	346
	KODARMA	404	402		KANPUR	364	360
	RANCHI HATIA	413	408		LUCKNOW	362	357
KNT	BELGAUM	322	320	WB	VARANASI	358	353
	BENGLURU	308	306		ASANSOL	354	350
	HUBLI DHARWAR	353	348		DARJEELING	287	284
	MERCARA	320	319		DURGAPUR	336	335
	MYSORE	327	326		HALDIA	403	398
KRL	ERNAKULAM	336	334		HOWRAH	303	302
	MUNDAKKAYAM	334	332		JALPAIGURI	291	289
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