



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

23 July

CITU-AIKS-AIAWU Countrywide Joint Protest



National leaders of CITU, AIKS, AIAWU & AIDWA in New Delhi



In flood-affected Assam



In Kashmir valley



In Tribal area of Jharkhand



In the Hills of Uttarakhand

23 July

CITU-AIKS-AIAWU Countrywide Joint Protest



Andhra Pradesh



Telangana



Chhattisgarh



Gujarat



Karnataka



Punjab



Uttar Pradesh



Madhya Pradesh

WORKING CLASS

AUGUST 2020

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Consolidate Micro Level Initiatives & Mobilisation

The contour of a new India is emerging in post Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns. The country will never be back to earlier position. Covid is going to live with us and lockdowns and restrictions will continue for a long time to come till country's entire people develop their own immunity through exposure or acquire immunity through vaccination.

A new situation has emerged under cover of Covid and lockdown; a centralised authoritarian regime has been imposed; democratic institutions and norms have been put under lockdown; the basic economic structure is being demolished; handing over national assets and natural resources to domestic and foreign corporates through privatisation and FDI routes; educational policy changed with centralised, communal and commercial orientation; unprecedented attacks have been concentrated on all sections of the working people – the workers, peasantry and others; with corporatisation of agricultural land and produce and pro-owners labour laws changes through Ordinances and Executive Orders; dearness allowance is being freezed; huge number of workers, including migrant and unorganised sector workers, losing jobs; unemployment rising; spiralling prices of essentials including petroleum products is taking place – a new India emerging.

However, despite lockdowns, restrictions, restructuring and intense class attacks; opposition and resistance are also growing. New form in major movements has emerged in countrywide micro level mobilisation, in place of bigger mobilisation at major centres, as has been seen in all recent independent and joint programmes of the trade unions, peasants organisations and in the workers-peasants joint agitations including in the rising tide of workers strikes as has been seen in recent coal workers strike also due to micro level initiative and mobilisation. With this experience the working people are converging to intensive movement as will be seen in 9 August historic day movement. New movement is emerging in new India.

We must understand and consolidate this micro level initiatives and mobilisation through reorientation of our own organisational decision making bodies, activating those and developing quick and effective communication system at all levels at the earliest. This organisational initiative commensurate with lockdown restrictions and physical immobility.

We must also remain vigilant against the pitfall of individual replacing the collective in such a situation. Social networking is basically developed for and between individuals. We have to learn and practice IT and electronic system for our own collective work. (02.08.2020)

23 July 2020

Workers – Peasants - Agricultural workers’ Countrywide Massive Protest

Awaiting report from some states, which will add to the numbers, available report till 31 July 2020 recorded more than 2,00,000 workers – peasants – agricultural workers joining the protest demonstrations at more than 2,000 centres, including the blocks, in 200 districts across the country in response to the joint call of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and All India Agricultural Workers’ Union (AIAWU) on 23 July 2020 demanding –

- Free universal healthcare for all;
- 10 Kg free food grains per person per month to all for 6 months;
- Rs.7,500 per month for all non tax- paying families for 6 months;
- Under MNREGA, 200 days work at Rs.600 per day wage or unemployment allowance;
- Enactment and implementation of urban employment guarantee scheme;
- Rescinding Ordinances / Executive Orders amending Essential Commodities Act, Farm Trade, Electricity Act and Labour Laws;
- No Privatisation of Public Sector Enterprises and Services.

Severe discontent among the people against the government was visible in the massive workers-peasants participation in the protest. At many places organisations of youth, women and others also joined the protest.

Despite rains and devastating flood in Assam, the protest programme was held at many places along with the demand for flood relief. In Tripura’s state capital Agartala, 120 activists along with the state leaders of CITU, AIKS, AIAWU, AIDWA and GMP (Gana Mukti Parishad of the tribals) were arrested and detained. There is severe repression in the State. In Haryana, the protest was held on 24 July, because of local festival.

There was massive participation of the migrant workers, demanding jobs, and of the scheme workers on Covid duty demanding safety gear and timely payment of wages, in the programme in several states. ASHA workers in Madhya Pradesh went on one day’s strike.

In a joint congratulatory message to the grass root activists for their massive campaign among the working people and making the 23 July protest programme successful across the country; CITU, AIKS and AIAWU called upon the workers, peasantry and the people to step up the united struggles against the anti-people, anti-farmer, anti-worker neoliberal policy regime and join in large number in the countrywide Jail Bahro / Satyagraha agitation, called by the joint platforms of the central trade unions as well as the peasants organisations, on 9 August 2020, ‘Quit India Day’ with the slogan “Save India” - “Save People”.

BSNL Employees’ Agitation

BSNL Employees Union held countrywide lunch hour demonstration on 21 June and staged dharna on 26 June in front of BSNL offices across India demanding BSNL’s revival, launching of its 4G service and on other burning issues of the employees.

Working Class Comes Out To Confront Challenges

Hemalata

- Workers were asked to step out of their houses to step up the struggle.
- They not only stepped out, but started marching on the streets.

The Call

The joint platform of central trade unions and independent industrial federations gave the call for an All India Protest Day to be observed on 3 July. This followed the joint protests held all over the country on 22 May 2020, which were held when the rigid lockdown was still on. On that day workers held placards and shouted slogans from within the compounds of their houses and in the limited factories and establishments which had started functioning.

Since then the dubious intention of the Modi-led BJP government to utilise the lockdown to push through its neoliberal agenda became blatantly visible. The government has put the entire country with all its wealth – the public sector, our natural resources and human resources – at the feet of the big corporates and businesses, to satisfy their hunger for profits. The people of the country cannot remain silent spectators to such mortgaging of the country to the domestic and foreign multinationals. The working class decided to raise the pitch of the struggle. The joint trade union platform called for the all India protest day on 3 July to be followed by non-cooperation, resistance and defiance of the present neoliberal regime.

CITU called upon the working class to step out of their houses, and following all the lockdown protocols put in place by the different State governments, step up the struggle towards defiance and resistance to the anti-people and anti-national policies of the BJP government.

The Response

Coal Workers Strike & Its Impact: The response from the working class was magnificent. The 3 days coal workers' joint strike against commercial mining and privatisation, which started one day before the All India Protest Day on 2 July and ended on 4 July, inspired the entire working class of the country. Such a joint strike was unprecedented in the history of the coal workers movement. Production and dispatch of coal came to a total halt. Even before a few weeks, strike in coal mines was not considered possible. But the aggressiveness of the BJP government in starting the bidding process, which the Prime Minister himself inaugurated, angered the coal workers. The workers coined and popularised the slogan '*whether anybody leads or not, the coal workers' will go on strike*'. It was the workers at the pit level who campaigned and organised the strike, even as the national or state leaders could not physically visit coal mines though the leaders of all the unions were actively following up and guiding the strike. The strike was unitedly led by all the trade unions in the coal sector.

3 July Protest: The coal strike created confidence and enthusiasm among all sections of workers all over the country and propelled them into action on 3 July. Over ten lakh workers and employees across the country participated in the protest actions. In several states, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab etc workers marched on the streets. Police resorted to

arrests in Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh, in Kolkata in West Bengal and in some other places.

A significant feature of the protest day on 3 July was the huge participation of the workers from the organised sector. In the previous protest actions, scheme workers and unorganised sector workers like anganwadi employees, ASHAs, construction workers, MGNREGA workers were the major participants, in the villages and interior parts of the country. While these sections did participate in many places this time too, in view of the ensuing all India Demands Day of All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers on 10 July and the recently held all India protest day of ASHAs and midday meal workers, their presence was comparatively less on this occasion.

In the protest actions on 3 July, it was the work places, the factories, offices, mines and others, which were the main centres where demonstrations took place; not so much the homes and neighbourhoods. In addition to the industrial workers, new sections of workers like the Toll Plaza workers in Punjab, head load workers, rice mill workers etc participated in large numbers. Insurance, bank, BSNL, defence etc employees also participated in large numbers. This indicates the growing anger against non payment of wages, wage cuts, retrenchments, reduction in the workforce and increasing work load and working hours etc in the factories, offices and establishments that have started functioning. In several factories and establishments, mainly in the private organised sector in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka etc, workers have even been going on strike against non-payment of wages, wage cuts, retrenchments etc; in several cases they were successful. The IT employees, including in big MNCs like Cognizant, also face these problems and are seeking union interventions.

Another significant feature is the huge participation of the railway employees in the protest actions. The major two recognised unions of the railway employees, the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) and National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR) remained conspicuously silent about the latest measures of the Modi-led BJP government which has announced privatisation of 109 pairs of trains, corporatisation of the railway production units and other measures to sell off the Indian Railways to big domestic and foreign corporates. But the All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA) and some unions of the railway employees like the Eastern Railwaymen's Union affiliated to AIRF, Dakshin Railway Employees' Union affiliated to CITU, Indian Railway Employees' Federation etc joined the All India Protest Day opposing railway privatisation and focusing on their own demands. Large numbers of loco running staff participated in these demonstrations held almost all over the country.

The Message

Through these massive actions, the working class has unambiguously expressed its anger which has been utilising the lockdown to put the country on sale, nullify all labour laws and also kill peasant-farming in favour of corporate-farming. It is a shame that the BJP government led by Modi which tries to deceive the nation by raising jingoistic and pseudo nationalistic slogans is in reality mortgaging national interest by privatising coal, defence, railways, banks etc. It is even more shameful that lockdown period is sought to be utilised to push these destructive exercises.

The working class has sent a strong message that the working class, which creates the wealth of this country, will not tolerate and accept lying down the machinations of imposing

conditions of slavery on them. This is a warning for further intensification of joint struggle towards non-cooperation, resistance and defiance in the coming days, if the BJP government remains adamant in implementing these disastrous policies.

Incoming Agitations

The online meeting of CITU secretariat, which was held on 6 July, briefly reviewed the 3 July protest day and expressed satisfaction at the magnificent response of the working class. It has decided to immediately start the campaign for the action programme to be decided by the meeting of the joint trade union platform on 8 July, as part of its call for 'non cooperation, resistance and defiance'.

In addition, the CITU secretariat also decided to organise demonstrations at the railway stations and railway headquarters, against railway privatisation, on 16 / 17 July 2020. It has decided to seek the support of all sections of people against this measure, which not only affects the railway employees but equally all sections of the toiling people like daily wage workers, vendors, employees, students etc.

The secretariat also called upon all the committees and cadres of CITU to organise block level demonstrations and blockades on the joint protest day along with AIKS and AIAWU on 23 July on the demands of 10 kg food grains per person per month for the next six months, Rs 7500 cash transfer every month for all non income tax paying families for the next six months and jobs, particularly MGNREGA work to everybody who seeks work including migrant workers, in the rural areas with Rs.600 per day as wage, and extension of employment guarantee scheme to urban areas.

Failure to Contain Covid-19, But Aggressive Policy Thrust

The inept handling of Covid-19 by the BJP government has failed to bend the curve of the disease. A state like Kerala, where the LDF government's efforts to contain the spread of the disease have won national and international accolades, had to re-impose strict 'triple' lockdown in Thiruvananthapuram and some other places. Large number of people coming from other countries and other states within the country are testing positive. In some other states too stricter lockdown rules are being put in place. The situation of the disease and lockdown, the distress of the workers because of the lockdown, unemployment, loss of income etc are not the same across the country. It differs in different States and even within the State.

But the BJP government is not taking one minute to stop to think about the disastrous impact of its policies on the people or on the country. It is taking the lockdown as an opportunity not to be missed, to fast track these measures. The working class and the toiling people of the country cannot allow this. They have to unite and utilise each and every possibility to visibly and loudly make their opposition to these policies; to warn the government that these machinations will not be allowed.

Time for Joint Actions

United struggles of the working class, united struggles of the workers, peasants and agricultural workers, united struggles of all the toiling and progressive sections of the people, raising the level of struggles till these policies are defeated and the path for ushering in alternative policies is laid, are the only way forward today.

Now is the time to plan and initiate such joint struggles.

AIFAWH's '*Lalkar Diwas*' Challenged Modi's

Unlocking Exploitation, Locking Democratic Rights

A R Sindhu

One crucial section of the frontline workers - all women, not recognized as workers, ill treated all through - are visible in fighting the dual danger of Covid-19 pandemic and increased hunger and malnutrition due to the lockdown.

India's scheme workers of Anganwadi, ASHA and Mid Day Meal are risking their lives and dying when the Indian middle class is enjoying the era of work from home, online meetings and 'clean air' and 'clean rivers'; and the Indian ruling class is busy in toppling governments and selling off the country's assets and sovereignty.

On the day the corporate media was 'celebrating' the dialogue between the great Prime Minister, who arranged diyas, tali, thali and flowers for these workers; and the CEO of a corporate who would buy the assets, created in our country, in the name of investment; and how the superstar, who got infected, slept and what all he had for breakfast etc; an Anganwadi worker in UP was admitted in hospital trying to commit suicide who did not get the wages for the last one year, the body of an Anganwadi employee of Sanakhemundi block in Odisha, who was engaged in COVID duty, lay at a waste dumping yard for several hours with her daughter sitting beside her body helplessly.

At the same time, thousands of Anganwadi workers and helpers, wearing red dress and red masks, were on the streets demanding their rights for safety and wages, and the right of every child born in the country to live.

The scheme workers – the 10 lakh ASHA workers and facilitators going door to door conducting surveys, educating the people and taking care of the people in quarantine centres; 26 lakh Anganwadi employees performing similar duties along with ASHA workers and also distributing ration door to door to the beneficiaries; 27 lakh Mid Day Meal workers supplying ration door to door to the school going children and performing duties in community centres and quarantine centres; and other workers under the National Health Mission (NHM) including the 108 Ambulance workers - have been working at the grass root among the community risking the lives of their own and of their family members. Most of them are not provided with any kind of safety measures, even masks and sanitizers. Many are termed as 'carriers of Corona' and are being attacked. There are scores of cases of them getting infected with Covid -19, not getting proper treatment and hospitalization, and some are dying of Corona. In many cases they are not even getting the life insurance amount, announced with much fanfare by the government. The hospitalization and quarantine expenses are to be borne by these workers themselves since do not have insurance coverage. There is no additional allowance for them for risking their lives. They do not get even wages on time; not to talk about house rent and other allowances.

Increasing malnutrition, worsening health and attack on ICDS

It is almost four months of the lockdown and the fight against pandemic, the cases of infection and deaths are increasing alarmingly in the country. What is more alarming, Government has not made any improvement in the health infrastructure or facilities during this period for which it had declared the lockdown. Only Rs.15,000 crore is allotted for the health sector when, in the same period, it has written off Rs.68,000 crores of loans of 50 individuals including Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallya. Entire health budget for the year is only Rs.69,000 crores and the total budget on ICDS, meant for 8 crore children, 2 crore mothers and 26 lakh Anganwadi workers and helpers, is only around Rs.15-18,000 crores. While 40 crore Indians have become poorer during this period, Mukesh Ambani has almost doubled his assets and became the sixth richest individual in the world!

Now, the UNICEF has come out with the report that, since the schools and Anganwadis are closed and the no noon meal is provided to the children, the malnutrition among them will increase manifold in the coming days. **It had estimated that in the next 6 months an additional 3 lakh children, under the age of 5 years, will die due to poverty and malnutrition in our country.**

Since the lockdown, ICDS is not providing hot cooked meal. The quantity of dry ration per child is so less that it cannot ensure children's required amount of nutrition every day. Since the start of the lockdown, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) of CITU has been demanding that the quantity and quality of the ration must be improved. But the government is neither ready to increase the allocation for ICDS nor any basic service. Instead, utilizing the lockdown, it is promoting cash transfer. UP and Bihar governments are trying for cash transfer in place of food grains. Modi government has already proposed cash transfer (DBT) in ICDS and started pilot projects in UP and Rajasthan. Even the ration, which is the right of every child and mother, is not supplied properly.

Building resistance

Recently, stories appeared in the media about the 'poor' women workers and 'poor' migrant workers for drawing sympathy and some charitable actions. What is missing in these stories is about the right of these workers. In case of the scheme workers and related issue, the crucial question is about the right of the people for basic services - nutrition, health and education. In these reports the workers' rights of collective bargaining and of strike are totally absent. The scheme workers, while fighting Covid, are also fighting against malnutrition, absolute poverty and hunger. During the lockdown days, they are doing their duties and more, the considerable relief work among the needy distributing food, sanitisers, masks etc; while remaining in the forefront of the fight for their own rights.

CITU remains in the forefront in organising some of the most participatory and innovative struggles during this period starting with the 21 April 2020 movement on '*Bhashan Nahi; Ration Chahiye*' (No Speech, Provide Food); taking up the safety issues of Covid frontline workers on 14 May with slogan '*Fool Nahi; Suraksha Chahiye*' (No flowers, Provide Safety) which evoked tremendous response, even from the public.

In many States there were militant struggles by the workers of ASHA and Anganwadi including strike actions which forced the authorities to accept some of their demands including that of additional remuneration and hospitalization. On 25 June 2020, ASHA workers all over the country observed Demands Day at the call of All India Coordination Committee of ASHA Workers (CITU) staging militant countrywide demonstrations. On 26 June 2020, Mid Day Meal workers, under the leadership of MDMWFI of CITU also held countrywide protest. The MDM workers, the poorest and socially marginalised, are deprived of 2 months wage (only of Rs.1000 per month) by the government on the ground that they are not entitled to wage during the schools summer holidays.

Lalkar Divas – Massive Response

In this background AIFAWH took the decision to observe the All India Demands Day as *Lalkar Divas*, which is being observed every year on the most relevant issues, this year to challenge the government, which unlocked the exploitation, but locked down democracy, demanding to strengthen ICDS with slogan '*Don't allow the 3 lakh children to die*'. Being the in the frontline of struggle, it decided militant action at the project level in red uniform and red masks.

Accordingly, to observe *Lalkar Divas*, nearly 2 lakhs of Anganwadi employees, many wearing red dress and red masks, staged demonstration and submitted memorandum to the Prime Minister and WCD Minister through the local authorities on 10 July 2020 at about 23,000 centres in 22 States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Pondicherry, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal demanding safety gear, insurance and risk allowance for Covid- 19 duty, recognition as workers, minimum wages, pension and social security, and most importantly, increased allocation for ICDS especially for the nutrition. In Karnataka, three days protest started on 13 July 2020. AIFAWH congratulated all the State unions and all the Anganwadi workers and helpers for making the programme a grand success.

In solidarity at CITU centre in New Delhi, its national leaders including President Hemalata, General Secretary Tapan Sen, M L Malkotia, S Deve Roye, J S Majumdar joined AIFAWH Lalkar Divas programme with its General Secretary A R Sindhu and Treasurer Anju Maini.

At the initiative of AIFAWH, the scheme workers' joint platform of all the central trade unions have decided to intensify the Struggles of Defiance by organising 3 days countrywide three days strike in early August in pursuance of 12 point demands - Double the allocation to ICDS urgently; Increase the quantity and quality of nutrition supply to the beneficiaries; - Recognise Anganwadi Workers and Helpers as 'Workers', Pay minimum wages Rs.30,000pm to workers and Rs.21000 to Helpers; Equal wages to Mini Workers; Provide Pension, ESI, PF etc as per the recommendations of 45th and 46th ILC; - Provide safety gear for all Anganwadi workers and helpers, especially those in the health sector; PPEs for those who are engaged in containment areas and red zone ; Frequent, random and free Covid-19 test of all frontline workers; - Rs.50 lakh insurance cover to all frontline workers covering all deaths on duty; also coverage of treatment for Covid-19 for the entire family; - Make ICDS permanent

with adequate budget allocation. No privatisation in any form; No Cash Transfers in ICDS; Convert all Mini centres to Full Centres; - Additional Covid Risk Allowance of Rs.25,000 per month for all anganwadi workers and helpers engaged in Covid -19 duty. Payment of all the pending dues immediately; - Compensation of minimum Rupees Ten lakhs for all those who got infected while on duty; Strengthen the ECCE in Anganwadis; Ensure food, healthcare, education, income, jobs and shelter to all; - No increase in working hours from 8 to 12 hours; No freezing of Labour Laws; - No Privatisation of PSEs and services; and - Withdraw the ordinances on agricultural trade and ECA immediately.

Urea Sector and so-called 'Atma Nirbhar' Bharat

Nishith Chowdhury

An article headlined '*Five new plants coming by 2023, first Atmanirbhar boost may be in urea*' was published in the Indian Express from Delhi on July 13. The writer has tried to establish the effort of the Narendra Modi government in building a self-reliant India forgetting totally that such announcement was made by Modi & company only a few days back and the initiative to make the country self-reliant in Urea was taken long long back much before the emergence of the party that Modi belongs to. His party was rather instrumental in closing down several public sector urea producing units during 2002-03, thereby, making the country import dependent. We will come to the story later.

Announcement of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'

It was on 12 May 2020, while declaring a financial package of Rs.20 lakh crore to cope with the situation created by Covid-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Modi announced the need to build a self-reliant India. It was nothing but yet another jumla, nowhere nearer to what we understand by self-reliance and, factually, it was self-deception only. The architect of selling CPSUs, forest lands, mines, defense production and all other national assets is now speaking of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Following this announcement, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, through five press conferences, announced the detailed measures under the economic package. Factually nothing was there for the poorer mass, labourers, migrants who have been adversely affected by Covid. The package was a bonanza for the corporate and big business houses. At her fifth and final press conference on May 17, a new PSE policy was announced with plans to privatise PSEs, except the ones functioning in certain strategic sectors which will be defined and notified later by the government. In strategic sectors too she announced that at least one PSE will remain, but private sector will also be allowed. She further declared that in order to minimise wasteful administrative costs, number of enterprises in strategic sectors will ordinarily be only one to four; others will be privatized / merged / brought under holding companies. In other words a self-reliant India will be built on private capital. Are we living in a fool's paradise?

Well it may be a bold step towards building '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' with the private capital taking care of fulfilling the dream of Modi & Company. But how it is that urea sector has now been dragged out to prove the building of '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' especially when the policy

announcement is only of May 12, 2020 and the revival exercise of closed urea manufacturing units by consortium of CPSUs are continuing since last so many years?

Memories recollected

Let us recollect our memory on what the move of BJP lead NDA government was towards urea sector in the country. In September 2002 when the NDA Govt under Atal Bihari Vajpayee was in full swing, a decision was taken to close down two PSUs engaged in the business of manufacture and sale of urea fertilizer and accordingly, the factories under the two PSUs viz., Sindri, Gorakhpur, Ramagundam and Talcher under Fertilizer Corporation of India Ltd. (FCIL) and Durgapur, Barauni and Haldia under Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFCL) were closed and almost all employees were released under a VSS scheme by early 2003. The reasons cited for that decision were obsolescence and uneconomic cost of production and availability of urea in the international market at a throw away price of US \$ 80 only per ton. The decision, as informed sources pointed out even at that time, had far reaching implications seriously detrimental to national interest. In retrospect, the decision was singularly lacking in foresight. A decade later, that prediction came true. The country soon began to reap the far-reaching negative consequences of closing down the plants. Food security was endangered with the non-availability of fertilizers at the right time, speculative market condition of Urea, its hoarding and black marketing etc. Imports went on increasing and taking advantage of such eventuality, the import price of urea started rising abnormally. In the year 2010-11, the total import of urea was 8.73 million ton. According to Annual Report of Department of Fertilizers for the year 2010-11, the import price of urea jumped from US\$ 280.75 per ton in January 2007 to US\$ 815 per ton in January 2008. The import figure of 2019-20 was quite alarming to the tune of 11 million tonne.

Meanwhile UPA-I with left support based on a Common Minimum Program assumed office in 2004. One of the first policy announcements made by the government under Dr Manmohon Singh was an "in principle" decision to revive the closed factories of FCIL and HFCL only owing to consistent pressure of the Left parties. But, thereafter too, for nearly seven years, due to constant objection of the strong import lobby, nothing practically happened on the ground.

But, the Left consolidation in the Parliament, both in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, under the leadership of Basudeb Acharya was constantly pursuing the government through their regular interventions on the floor of the Houses and host of memoranda to the ministry, including the Prime Minister, deputation with the trade union leadership of the fertilizer sector; and it was only on August 4, 2011 that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the government's proposal to revive the eight closed factories of Fertilizer Corporation (FCI) and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation (HFC) in various ways. It was decided that the Talcher factory in Orissa would be revived through a consortium of Coal India, Rastriya Chemicals, Gas Authority of India Ltd and Fertilizer Corporation (CIL, RCF, GAIL & FCIL) and the factory would be coal based. Closed Ramagundam plant in Telangana would be revived through a consortium of Engineers India, National Fertilizers and Fertilizers Corporation (EIL, NFL & FCIL) and the plant will be gas based. The Sindri factory in Jharkhand would also be revived through a state-owned consortium though the names of the participants were not specified at the time. The Central government also said that the remaining five closed factories

would be revived through private investment to be awarded through auctions. However despite repeated attempts, no private entrepreneur came forward.

Profitability in this sector is quite low, only 12% post tax return is allowed through a special pricing scheme. Urea is still under government control and its selling price is much lesser than the cost of production with government subsidies to make up for the production cost. In spite of tremendous pressure mounted over the government by the proponents of 'no subsidy', no government dared to stop subsidy in this sector and increase urea price.

On May 26, 2014, the Narendra Modi-led BJP government came to power. Though this government was much more corporate friendly still none came forward to take over the closed Gorakhpur, Barauni, Durgapur, Haldia or Korba plants. The Modi government could not reverse the cabinet decision of the earlier government on revival of the Talcher, Ramagundam and Sindri plants through consortium of CPSUs but was not that fast also to execute the said decision. Rather they tried vigorously to sell out the remaining plants to private entity. Having failed to get any response from private entrepreneurs the Modi Cabinet was finally forced to take a decision on July 13, 2016 to form another consortium of PSUs viz, Coal India (CIL), National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) with Fertilizer Corporation of India (FCIL) and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation (HFCL) to revive the Sindri plant in Jharkhand, Barauni in Bihar and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. It was also told that the revival of remaining plants would be taken up later. This is in brief how the decision of revival of closed plants was finalized. Can anyone claim exclusively that it is an achievement of the Modi Government? Rather deliberate delay in executing the revival scheme of the closed plants has caused tremendous burden of import at ruling high international price and at the end of their first five year of rule, the inaction of the government under Modi's leadership led to a record breaking import of 11 million tonnes of Urea valued at \$ 2.89 billion during 2019-20. Factually, this government is to be out rightly accused and blamed for such criminal negligence.

Fertilizer Industry and National Gas Grid

Let us now look at the argument that the cost of production in the closed plants was uneconomic. Considering that almost 70% of the cost of production of urea is the cost of feedstock (i.e. the basic raw material), the determining factor is the nature of feedstock employed. Till the mid 1980s the feedstock for manufacture of ammonia (and then to urea) were naphtha and fuel oil/LSHS, all of which are derived from crude petroleum in refineries. Only a few plants operated on natural gas available from Assam and Gujarat oil fields. The extraction of oil and natural gas in Bombay High and the installation of the HBJ pipeline led to setting up of a series of urea plants in late 1980s in private and co-operative sectors. This was a period when there was a real boost in domestic production of urea. Because of the 'in principle' decision of 2004 to revive the closed fertilizer plants, the government opposed liquidation of the closed plants during BIFR hearings and rather argued for revival of the plants sooner the much preferred feedstock Natural Gas is available. The Petroleum and Natural Gas ministry too came forward with its blue print of availability and supply of natural gas through extending the Hazira Vijaypur Jagdishpur pipe line to Haldia in West Bengal through the States of UP, Bihar and Jharkhand as a part of completing the National Gas Grid. This was substantiated by the statement of the then Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural

Gas Jitin Prasad in the Rajya Sabha on March 16, 2010 in reply to an un-starred question no. 2084 of Tapan Sen. The minister stated that GAIL has been given the responsibility of laying the gas pipe lines during July 2007 and GAIL Board accorded approval of the project on 24 July 2009. He also stated that the work of another gas pipeline from Kankinara in Krishna-Godavari basin to Basudebpur via Howrah was awarded to Reliance Gas Transportation Infrastructure Limited. It was informed that that work on Jagadishpur-Haldia gas line project would start in 2011 and would be completed by 2013. Similarly, work on Kankinara-Basudebpur-Howrah project will be completed by 2012. Earlier, on August 18 2006, in response to a question from MPs Sunil Khan and Basudev Acharya (Unstarred Question No. 2337), the then Minister Dinsa Patel said that the Left Front government in West Bengal was repeatedly pressurizing to build the gas infrastructure and GAIL would take up the job of laying the gas pipeline from Jagadishpur to Haldia as soon as it is assured of getting natural gas. It must be realised that all those initiatives were taken with the sole intention of restarting the closed fertilizer plants.

Honestly, our country's natural gas reserves are far behind the country's overall demand and to bridge the gap of demand and supply import of natural gas in liquid form in cryogenic vessels was the only alternative for which several Liquid Natural Gas terminals with the facility of re-gasification have been set up across the sea shores. The original plan was to extend the pipeline beyond Jagdishpur to Haldia, but with some changes in the plan, it was decided to start from Phulpur in UP instead of Jagdishpur. Finally, yes, during the Narendra Modi regime, in July 2015 after renaming the Jagdishpur – Haldia / Bokaro – Dhamra Pipe line project (JHBDPL) as 'Prime Minister's Urja Ganga Project', the decision to physically lay the pipeline was taken. But one must appreciate that the delay of execution to the tune of about a decade has added to not only the cost of execution but also on the import cost of urea. Might be that government was exploring the possibility of replacing the giant public sector GAIL by some private entity during that period of time.

It is heartening that Phase-I of the project from Phulpur up to Dobhi (Gaya) with spur line to Varanasi, Patna, Gorakhpur and Barauni has already been commissioned in 2019. In Phase-II, the pipeline is supposed to be extended to West Bengal and Odisha and connect via en-route spur lines to Barauni, Bokaro, Ranchi, Sindri, Rourkela, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Angul, Cuttack, Bhubaneshwar, Paradip, Jamshedpur, Durgapur, Kolkata and Haldia. The plan to lay a total of 183 km of pipelines includes 72 km for Orissa, 524 km for Jharkhand and 550 km for West Bengal. As per Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas the progress of phase II of the project is quite satisfactory. The construction work of Dobhi–Durgapur pipeline section was supposed to be completed by December 2019 which is lagging by more than a year as of now. The running of Matix Fertilizer in Panagarh near Durgapur in West Bengal is dependent on when the gas will be made available to them and the fully commissioned plant is lying idle. In the third phase, work is underway to lay 629 km pipeline from Barauni to Guwahati. There are also plans to extend the pipeline from Angul to Mumbai. The potential gas sources for the JHBDPL pipeline include Regasified LNG (RLNG) from the Dahej (Gujarat) and Dabhol (Maharashtra) LNG terminals via the Vijaipur-Auraiya-Phulpur pipeline and some sources of Coal Bed Methane (CBM) projects en route.

The laying of National Gas Grid cannot be questioned but over dependence on imported liquid natural gas is a matter of concern. Here also import lobby is quite strong and alternative must be explored. There is very little progress in exploration of Coal Bed Methane (CBM) or methane rich Shale Gas in the country although reserve of this form of natural gas in the country is quite high. The private players awarded with various such projects could not prove their worth and one such example is the tardy performance of Ms Essar Oil in extracting CBM from the CBM Blocks awarded to them in the Raniganj area in West Bengal. As a result, the Urea manufacturing Unit of their sister concern M/s Matix Fertilizers and Chemicals at Panagarh near Durgapur is still idling for want of gas. For self reliance the only alternative is to award the Blocks to ONGC which this government will never explore as they want a 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' built with private capital.

Conclusion

The construction activities of all the five plants are in full swing and are expected to be fully commissioned within 2023. It has been mentioned in the article that two more private sector urea manufacturing units viz, Nagarjuna Fertilizers and Chemicals at Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh and Matix Fertilizers & Chemicals at Panagarh near Durgapur in West Bengal are now idling with the companies defaulting in loans. So far as Matix is concerned it is a story of chorny capitalism for which some other article is to be written. Now to bail them out, new promoters are possibly to be explored. On confirmed availability of natural gas and with new Promoters may again be some CPSU, these plants can also resume production. Thus reduction of import to the tune of around 9 million tonne can be expected within next three years. But we must realize that whatever gain the country is going to achieve in urea production is through public sector only and claim of this success by the Modi government as their achievement is factually betrayal to their dream of making 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' on private capital.

Finally, a few words to conclude. What China did to be self-reliant on urea production if studied, we can find the true alternative in our country too. Alike India, coal reserve in China too have high ash content. During 1990s, China's urea manufacturing units with Naphtha and Fuel Oil / LSHS were also confronted with obsolescence and uneconomic cost of production. Availability of natural gas was also scarce. Without exploring the route of importing LNG, the Chinese government decided to convert all such naphtha and oil based plants to coal based and within 5 to 6 years the plants were quite successfully commissioned with coal as feedstock. They arranged proportionate mixing of the high ash content coal with pet-cokes, a refinery byproduct to achieve the desired result. In fact this was truly an approach towards self-reliance. Talcher plant is getting revived with this technology imported from China and had such approach to use coal instead of LNG, been initiated for the other plants that would have been a true implementation of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Will the Modi government tread on that path? It is most unlikely since the Govt is moving hell bent in privatizing the coal sector as well. Private corporate interest driven only by profit motive can never contribute in Atmanirbharata or self reliance. It has never happened, anywhere in the world. (28July 2020)

Mitigating Industrial Accidents

Dr M P Sukumaran Nair

Raging industrial accidents, since the lockdown following the Covid 19 pandemic, has become a matter of concern to the industry and governments.

Andhra Pradesh has witnessed a series of four incidents in the last two months, the latest being the fire and explosion at the solvent recovery plant of Visakha Solvents located in Ramkey Pharma City in the outskirts of Visakhapatnam on 13 July. The other accidents included a toxic gas release involving styrene monomer from LG Polymers' plant on 7 May; an ammonia gas leak from SPY Agro Industries in Nandyal in Kurnool district on 26 June; and a reactor blast happened at the facilities of Sainor Life Sciences on 30 June. These accidents have claimed 19 lives and caused injuries to many.

As is well known, the series of industrial accidents occurring repetitively in a matter of less than two months is indicative of the poor state of affairs with regard to the management of industrial safety. Anybody who has reasonable exposure to the management of industrial accidents in the present times contend that these accidents are avoidable with available expertise and diligent sight by the department in the government responsible for maintaining safety at the workplace. Indeed, it is credible to note the state government acted swiftly and proactively in receipt of the report of the expert committee which investigated the accident at LG Polymers.

As the one who has spent over 35 years in the chemical processing industry, I think that governmental action shall not end up with rehabilitating the victims, booking the culprits for non-compliances and implementing the recommendations intended not to repeat such failures in future either fully or partly. Accidents do happen in well designed and diligently operated chemical facilities, the main culprit of which is human error. A more important requirement is to build a safe work culture among our industrial workers as an important element of the organizational culture for which the operating companies are to be held responsible at the first instant closely followed by an equally competent professional supervision by the state's department concerning safety at the workplace.

In this respect it would be appropriate that the government immediately reviews the safety of all the hazardous installations and draw up a plan for safe work practices in the industry. Necessary training for the workforce and all those concerned shall be given so that they, in due course, develop a safe and sustainable work culture. Also they may be exposed to the vulnerabilities through a risk analysis of accidental situations that are likely to crop up at the shop floor and encourage them to identify near miss accidents and sense abnormal situations as and when they arise in the plants.

JOINT TRADE UNIONS ACTIONS

CTUs General & Solidarity Actions in August

The joint platform of the 10 central trade unions (CTUs) - INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, LPF and UTUC – after their 18 July meeting, circulated the programme of working class united action in India.

It states, “Hence the united platform of Central Trade Unions and Federations / Associations called upon to step up the struggles against the anti-people, anti-worker policies of the Govt both on sectoral and national level with continuity. It was decided that;

1. On 9th August – the “*Quit India Day*” should be observed as “**Save India Day**” through countrywide *stayagraha / jail Bharo* or any other form of militant agitations in all workplaces / industrial centres / district headquarters and rural areas etc.
2. On the day of *coal workers strike on 18th August 2020*, *militant solidarity actions* in all workplaces; and the PSUs, in particular, *possibility of strike action* should be explored wherever is possible.
3. The defence sector unions / federations have been jointly planning to give notice for strike on the basis of the strike ballot approved by more than 99 per cent workers. They may go for strike action sometimes in mid-September 2020. The united platform of CTUs and federations conceived the idea of *countrywide general strike against the policies of the Govt synchronising with the defence sector strike* and called upon all concerned to start preparation in that direction.
4. It is noted that the *Scheme workers* unions / federations (Anganwadi, ASHA, Mid Day Meal etc) have jointly decided to go in for *two days strike on 7th and 8th August 2020* which will converge with countrywide *satyagraha / jail Bharo* agitation on 9th August 2020. The joint meeting of CTUs and federations called upon all concerned to express *solidarity with the Scheme workers strike action*.
5. It has also been decided to *continue countrywide campaign against the Govt’s move on Railway privatization* in coordination with the unions / federations with the Railway Sector and also independently. Railway Federations reported that they are also planning and preparing for their response / actions at appropriate time.
6. It was agreed that the petition to President of India as a campaign which is circulated among CTUs will be finalized after receiving suggestions and then starting it as organisational campaign. Another suggestion was taken on board to initiate another petition to focus on specially unorganised sector workers’ problems. It was also decided that the Platform of CTUs will once again meet on 27th July for detailed discussion on preparations of 9th August programme to make it effective and visible.

We call upon all the state chapters of CTUs to conduct their meetings inviting the sectoral federations and associations to plan about the next phase of agitation, and take the exercise to districts and enterprise / industry level.

INDUSTRY & SECTOR

Road Transport

On 5 August 2020

Transport Workers Countrywide Protest

Transport workers All India Co-ordination Committee AICCORTWO notified the Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari about transport workers observing countrywide Protest Day on 5 August 2020 in pursuance of their 12 point demands which include - Withdrawal of enhanced excise duty and rollback of increased prices since 7 June; - Bringing petroleum products under GST; - Separate social security law for road transport workers; - Withdrawal of Motor Vehicle (amendment) Act 2019; - National wage policy for unorganised sector transport workers; - Budgetary support to STUs (state road transport undertakings); - Exemption of STUs from excise duty and sales tax on diesel and motor vehicle parts; - Electric buses only for STUs; Rs.750 to all unorganised sector transport workers for six months etc.

All India Co-ordination Committee of Road Transport Workers Organisations (AICCORTWO) includes National Federation of Indian Road Transport Workers (AITUC), All India Road Transport Workers Federation (CITU), Indian National Transport Workers Federation (INTUC), Maharashtra State Transport Kamgar Sanghatana (HMS), Labour Progressive Federation (LPF), TUCI, DTC Workers Unity Centre (AIUTUC), Telangana Mazdoor Union (TSRTC), Tamilnadu Government Transport Corporations Staff Federation (TGSCSF), Sarva Karmachari Sangh (UKRTC).

The road transport industry, both goods and passenger, had already been in crisis prior to Covid pandemic due to the government's policies including increase in already high diesel prices, third party insurance premium, toll charges, road tax and heavy increase of several other charges related to transport department.

Petty owners; self-employed auto rickshaw, taxi and truck drivers; unorganised transport sector workers were already in serious crisis. These workers have no social security and coverage of labour laws. They face harassment of police and other officials. There are instances of some workers dying because of the torture by the police and transport officials. The Covid pandemic added to their problems and the industry is virtually collapsed due to lockdown, some workers committed suicide.

The STUs throughout the country are facing financial crunch due to spiraling cost of operation, no capital contribution, illegal operation of private carriages etc. In such a situation, the workers are becoming scapegoats with reduction of manpower and consequent increase in workload; non-payment, delayed payment of wages and retiral dues; and deferment of DA till March 2021 etc.

Around one lakh private buses are going to be procured on hire for STUs under a

World Bank project. Instead, the Central government should procure one lakh buses for STUs, the AICCORTWO demanded. 5 August protest is being organised in such a situation and on just demands.

On 29 July, CITU has called upon its state committees and other federations “to render full support and help to the road transport workers’ organisations in implementing this call by activating the concerned unions to mobilise transport workers to participate in the protests”; and campaign widely among CITU members and all sections of working class in support of the Protest Day through social media, leaflets and posters wherever possible.

Anti-worker Anti-people M. V. Act 2019

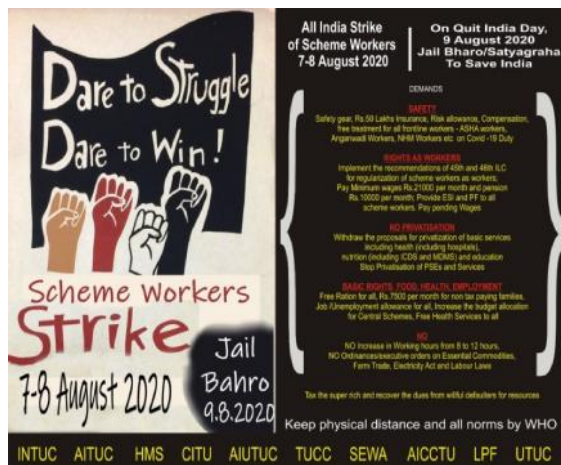
Draft Rules Notified

In a separate memorandum to the Union Ministry for Road Transport and Highways on 20 July, All India Road Transport Workers Federation (CITU) demanded extension of date till 31 December 2020 for submission of objections to the draft MV Rules 2020, notified as GSR 425(E) dated 1 July 2020, due to high rate of infection and mortality of Covid-19 pandemic; and serious restriction on transport workers movement due to lockdown.

Taking advantage of Covid lockdown, Modi government issued draft notification of the Central Rules under anti-worker and anti-people MV (Amendment) Act 2019 having wide and serious implications in the road transport sector, its workers and revenue of the States. There are also Constitutional and legal aspects as it encroaches upon the jurisdiction of the States. (30.07.2020)

Scheme Workers

Scheme Workers 3 Days Action Programme; Strike on August 7th-8th; Jail Bharo on 9th August



Different unions and federations of scheme workers, affiliated to the central trade unions, decided to resort to 3 days action programme - 2 days countrywide strike on 7-8 August culminating in joining the workers united Jail Bharo / Satyagraha programme of *Save India Day* on 9 August at the call of CTUs.

Wide campaign has been launched among the scheme workers through leaflets, social media etc on the issues faced by them and anti-worker policies of the BJP-led government. Various other sections of the scheme workers, especially the sections working in National Health Mission, are being contacted and organised to join the 3 days action programme. (30.07.2020)

STATES

Karnataka

TUs Protest against Proposed Labour Laws changes



The Joint Committee of Trade Unions (JCTU) staged protest demonstration on 11 May in front of the Labour Commissioner's office in Bangalore against BJP's Karnataka government's attempt to exempt implementation of the labour laws in the state to cover the 'losses' of the industry owners during Covid-19 lockdown. Report says Yediyurappa government, like its counterparts in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat; is all set to dilute some key labour laws which govern termination, retrenchment and closure by amending Factories Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Contract Labour Act etc, reported *Newslick* and the *Hindu*.

Subsequently, FKCCI (Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry) in their memorandum to the CM and industry minister sought deferment of existing labour laws for 3 years 'to attract new investment in the state and cautioned that it may lose opportunities if it does not follow suit especially when other states have already done so.'

Government on 23 July announced major changes in labour laws

After the Cabinet meeting on 23 July, the Karnataka government announced major changes in the labour laws "to help industries hit by COVID-19 and to attract investments under the New Industrial Policy 2020-2025 which was passed by the Cabinet". "Industrial associations have been talking to us. Today, several labour laws have to be amended and we have taken steps in this direction to initiate reforms," Industries Minister Jagadish Shettar said.

The announced proposed changes are to exclude from statutory coverage – in the Industrial Disputes Act raising minimum threshold of the number of workers seeking government's prior permission for closure; in the Factories Act minimum threshold of number of workers in the factories with electricity and without electricity, raising quarterly limit of hours in overtime work, allow women to work in night shifts, make rules for exemption of persons and increasing working hours; in Contract Labour Act increasing threshold of the minimum number of workers; in Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) State Rules pertaining to contract employment and fixed term employment.

JCTU's Opposition

Immediately, on 24 July, Joint Committee of Trade Unions (JCTU), the joint platform of the state units of INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, AICCTU, TUCC, HMKP and Garment and Textile Workers Union of Bangalore (GATWU); submitted memorandum to the state labour ministry strongly objecting to the proposed pro-employer labour laws changes not only against the interests of the workers but also of the country's economy particularly when, in the midst of Covid-19 lockdown, most of the countries in the world have been offering income-guarantee schemes, mandated job security, waived rents, and utility bills for its citizens including the workers. JCTU pointed out that by the proposed amendments more than 80% of the factories in Karnataka would be out of the coverage of labour laws. There is also the issue of deferment of VDA rise for one year.

JCTU notified statewide direct action in pursuance of their 6 point charter including revocation of the proposed labour laws amendments; Rs.7500 relief per month per family, outside IT-net, implementation of existing labour laws; restoration of tripartism; to stop 'hire and fire'; and strengthening of unorganised workers welfare boards and their funding.

JCTU's United Action on 29 July





On 29 July, at the call of JCTU, thousands of workers staged militant demonstrations and burnt order copies in front of the factory gates and industrial centres at more than 100 places in 17 districts and in front of the Karmika Bhavan, the Labour Commissioner's office in Bengaluru; registering their protest against the State's BJP government for freezing and deferring VDA for one year, introducing fixed term employment replacing permanent jobs along with changes in the several labour laws through promulgation of the Ordinance.

The government issued a notification on 30 June incorporating provision of fixed term employment in the Model Standing Order Rules. As against employers urging deferment of VDA under Minimum Wages Act for 4 months, which was strongly opposed by the trade unions in the state minimum wages advisory board, the pro-industry-owners BJP government issued an order deferring VDA of Rs.417, due since 1 April 2020, to till 1 April 2021. This will help the owners to gain a whopping Rs.2,275 Crores at the cost of the workers to cover their reduction in profit due to Covid-19 lockdown.

The state government, which was prepared to suspend the labour laws in line with some other state governments in May 2020 itself based on the directions from the Union Labour & Employment Ministry vide their circular of 2.5.2020, had withheld it due to the opposition of trade unions and of all opposition parties in the State.

However, the state government on 11.5.2020 wrote to the Union Home Ministry for prior approval of the proposed Ordinance changing labour laws. The Union Home Ministry, vide their letter of 2.7.2020, sent approval to the proposed Ordinance. The State Cabinet in their meeting of 23 July finalised the Ordinance to change the labour laws and, finally, the Ordinance was promulgated on 31 July 2020 as Ordinance No. 15 of 2020 - The Industrial Disputes and Certain Other Laws (Karnataka Amendment) Ordinance, 2020.

By this Ordinance, Sec.25 of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 has been amended raising the threshold of the minimum number of workers from 100 to 300 for prior permission of the state government before closure. This amendment is estimated to exclude 90 per cent of the factories of the state from this statutory regulation.

The Ordinance amended Sec.2 of the Factories Act, 1948 raising threshold of the minimum number of workers from 10 to 20 in factories with electricity and 20 to 40 without electricity. This will exclude estimated 64 per cent factories from statutory regulation. It also amended Sec.65 of the Act increasing quarterly limit of overtime hours from 75 to 125.

The Ordinance amended Sec.1(4)(a) of the Contract labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act 1970 raising threshold of minimum number of workers from 20 to 50. (Input: K. N. Umesh; 31.07.2020)

Uttarakhand

No Factories Act; No I. D. Act for 1000 Days

On 30 July, after Cabinet meeting, the state government announced its decision to promulgate Ordinance to bring major changes in the labour laws. The Cabinet minister Madan Kaushik claimed that this Ordinance is being brought as per instruction of the Central Government, reported national daily *Hindusthan* on 30 July. The Ordinance has been sent for Centre's approval.

The Ordinance suspends all provisions of Factories Act, 1948 and Industrial Disputes Act 1947 for 1000 days for the new industries in the State. For this, the Ordinance takes recourse of Sec.5 of Factories Act which provides 'Power to exempt during public emergency'. Similarly, it uses Sec.36B of the I. D. Act which empowers the government to exempt the provisions of the Acts.

The Ordinance also permits all existing industries, having up to 300 workers, to freely retrench workers and close industries.

Earlier, on 30 April, the state government issued order relaxing provision of Factories Act to increase daily working hours from 8 to 11 in the name of 'optimising production' during lockdown.

Workers Protest



Immediately, on 30 July itself, workers with CITU and SFI leaders and activists protested and burnt effigy of the chief minister and state labour minister near CITU office; at IT Park; and at tea garden in Dehradun and also in Missouri. (Input: Lekhraj; 31.07.2020)

Assam

Flood Relief Work by CITU

Assam, already under Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, has also been reeling under devastating flood with loss of lives, livelihood and households of the working people; destroyed infrastructures preventing communication and supply of essential services and goods; increasing large number of morbidity and danger of the spread of epidemic due to water-borne diseases.

Even in these dual calamities, Assam state committee of CITU launched relief and rehabilitation work among the flood victims despite Covid-19 lockdown restriction and immobility; and appealed to its members and public in general for contribution to its relief fund for the flood victims.

In a letter on 31 July, the General Secretary of CITU Tapan Sen congratulated the Assam state committee for their appreciable service to the suffering humanity during this disaster despite restrictions in the physical movement to reach out to the flood-affected people. With that, CITU centre has also sent Rs.1 Lakh to its Assam state committee as a token of its contribution to their relief work among the flood victims.

Tamilnadu

Activities Report

Anganwadi Employees Staged Massive State-wide Demonstrations

On 10 July, the Foundation Day of the Union, the Tamil Nadu Anganwadi Workers & Helpers Union (CITU), about 20,000 Anganwadi Workers and Helpers joined demonstrations at 14,596 Anganwadi centres of 325 projects in 30 districts of the State against privatisation attempts of the scheme and demanding safety measures for the Workers and Helpers who have been given Covid related work.

Employees of Local Bodies Staged Demonstration

The Federation of Local Administration Union (CITU) staged demonstrations in 19 districts joined by 8,672 workers on 12 May demanding the implementation of minimum wages for the Over Head Tank Operators as approved by the Govt of Tamil Nadu. Demonstrations were held again of 27 May demanding safety equipments for the workers.

Solidarity with Coal Workers against Privatisation

In solidarity with coal workers strike fighting against privatisation and commercial coal mining, CITU district committees staged demonstrations in Coimbatore, Tuticorin, Thiruvallur, Dharmapuri districts on July 1.

COTEE staged Demonstration before TNEB

CITU's Central Organisation of Tamilnadu Electricity Employees (COTEE) staged demonstration in front of Tamil Nadu Electricity Board offices at 129 centres on 2 July joined by 5,710 workers.

Construction Workers Agitation

The construction workers of Tamil Nadu staged demonstrations on 13 July demanding relief fund as announced by the State Govt. Around 5,500 workers participated in 32 districts.

As per the call of CWFI, its Tamil Nadu committee has held demonstrations on 13 July at 454 places joined by 7759 construction workers.

Power Loom Workers Demonstration

The powerloom federation of CITU state committee held demonstrations in 8 districts joined by 2400 powerloom workers demanding cash relief and employment.

Cooperative Employees Demonstration

Tamil Nadu Cooperative Employees Federation staged demonstrations at 1523 places with 3569 workers participation demanding of the Government to provide Rs.50 lakh Covid-19 Death relief, free medical examination, medical insurance of Rs.30 lakhs and proper safety equipment to the frontline workers and employees fighting Covid-19. (20.07.2020)

Punjab

Defying Government's Order; Upholding Trade Union Rights

Recently, the administration of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district, at the instance of the management of Shriyans Paper Limited, sent notice to Shriyans Paper Mill Workers Union (CITU) not to hold general body meeting of the union.

Defying government's order and defeating management's manoeuvre, the union successfully held its general body meeting peacefully and held election through secret ballot in which all 433 workers in the factory participated in the voting electing Raj Kumar as the new president and Ram Babu as its new general secretary.



The worker, who acted at management's instance, apologised in writing in the meeting itself. CITU Punjab state committee congratulated the workers and the newly elected leaders for their courage to defy government's order and defeating management's move by upholding union's trade union rights in holding meeting and conducting election. CITU Punjab state President Mahan Singh Rorhi was present guiding the meeting. (31.07.2020)

In Karnataka

'Interstate Migrant Workers Union' Formed

The Interstate Migrant Workers Union has been formed by CITU in Karnataka with K. N. Umesh as its President, Mahantesh Kariyappa as the Secretary, Sohel Mollah as the Organising Secretary and P. N. Murthy as the Treasurer. The inspectors from labour department visited Suri Bhavan, the CITU Karnataka state committee office in Bangalore, inspected the records and details of office bearers before issuing the union registration certificate.

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

State	Centre	May 2020	June 2020	State	Centre	May 2020	June 2020
AP	GUNTUR	302	305	MHR	MUMBAI	324	326
	VIJAYWADA	306	311		NAGPUR	406	410
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	306	308		NASIK	384	385
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	300	301		PUNE	367	367
	GUWAHATI	292	296		SHOLAPUR	352	353
	LABAC SILCHAR	289	294	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	350	355
	MARIANI JORHAT	279	280		ROURKELA	327	329
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	264	270	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	334	331
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	355	359	PUN	AMRITSAR	353	354
CHD	CHANDIGARH	325	326		JALANDHAR	332	332
CHS	BHILAI	333	336		LUDHIANA	311	312
DLI	DELHI	314	311	RJN	AJMER	299	300
GOA	GOA	348	352		BHILWARA	304	306
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	300	300		JAIPUR	323	324
	BHAVNAGAR	312	312	TN	CHENNAI	291	296
	RAJKOT	320	321		COIMBATORE	300	302
	SURAT	286	292		COONOR	346	350
	VADODARA	284	292		MADURAI	311	315
HRY	FARIDABAD	288	288		SALEM	301	298
	YAMUNANAGAR	312	310		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	321	318
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	280	282	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	348	353
J&K	SRINAGAR	300	298		HYDERABAD	279	285
JRK	BOKARO	313	316		WARRANGAL	338	340
	GIRIDIH	363	366	TRP	TRIPURA	277	277
	JAMSHEDPUR	377	384	UP	AGRA	381	381
	JHARIA	374	383		GHAZIABAD	351	351
	KODARMA	407	406		KANPUR	360	360
	RANCHI HATIA	417	409		LUCKNOW	358	362
KNT	BELGAUM	321	323	WB	VARANASI	351	352
	BENGLURU	306	308		ASANSOL	356	356
	HUBLI DHARWAR	351	354		DARJEELING	280	280
	MERCARA	316	319		DURGAPUR	341	342
	MYSORE	323	327		HALDIA	406	406
KRL	ERNAKULAM	335	339		HOWRAH	303	307
	MUNDACKAYAM	342	339		JALPAIGURI	286	291
	QUILON	377	381		KOLKATA	302	304
MP	BHOPAL	342	346		RANIGANJ	310	315
	CHHINDWARA	329	332		SILIGURI	291	299
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INTERNATIONAL

Solidarity Day with US People's Struggle

In response to the call of WFTU, Photos of National Solidarity Day with US People's Struggle against racial, social and economic discrimination, was observed on 24 June in different parts of India, as was across the globe, jointly by CITU affiliates.

Photos of the programme in Delhi-NCR, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Telangana were published in the July, 2020 E-edition of the Working Class. Following are further reports.

West Bengal



In West Bengal the protest was organised jointly by Left-led trade unions and other mass organisation by bringing out a huge procession and rally in Kolkata. Ruling TMC government's police arrested 26 leaders and activists of the central trade unions and of other mass organisation.

Delhi-NCR

On 24 June, in solidarity with US people's struggle and against racial, caste, colour, gender, religion, region and language based discrimination and violence in India and in the world meetings were organised at different places as also at AITUC office addressed by national leaders of AITUC, CITU, AIUTUC, AICCTU and UTUC explaining the situation in India and in the world and the struggle against the same.

Punjab

At the call of CITU, the Day was observed by holding gate meetings and public meetings in Ludhiana, Raikot, Bathinda, Hoshiarpur, Ropar, Asron, Fatehpur and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar districts and at other places to protest against racism and communalism.

The public meetings were addressed by CITU state general secretary Raghunath Singh, president Mahan Singh Rorhi and others.

Kerala

Cochin Port Employees' Organisation of CITU in their meeting adopted resolution stating, "We strongly protest the brutal killing of the African-American workers George Floyd. We condemn the continuing police discrimination and resist attack on section of the people. We express our strong solidarity with the struggles and fight of U.S. and international community against the State's oppression and injustice on the basis of racism."

Madhya Pradesh

In response to the joint call of the WFTU affiliated central trade unions in India, the Solidarity Day was observed in different parts of the State. In the State capital Bhopal, CITU, AITUC, AIUTUC with unions in banks, insurance and others jointly staged protest demonstration against racism in USA and also against all types of divisive policies based on race, religion, region, caste, gender, language etc.

Similar programme was held by CITU in the major cities of Indore, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Rewa; at Pathakhera, Pench Kahan and other collieries; cement factory in Rewa and other places.

WFTU Campaign: Solidarity to the US people's struggle

2 June 2020

The popular outrage that erupted a week ago in the United States after the cold-blooded murder of 47-year-old African-American worker George Floyd by police in Minneapolis is continuing against the state repression and the brutal force used by the police. Hundreds of thousands of Americans took the streets over the weekend in more than 80 major cities, in two-thirds of the country's states, to protest state barbarism and racist violence, of the repressive forces.

Despite the outcry over the 47-year-old's death, the government is escalating threats to the masses and offering "more military means if governors and mayors need it and cannot control the situation". One more time the capitalists and their governments prove that the life of the ordinary people has no value for the capitalists.

The organisations of the working class must be now in the forefront of the struggle for social justice, equality, against state oppression. The WFTU calls every trade union, every trade unionist who respects itself to support the struggle of the people in USA. We demand the immediate end of police violence. The unemployed and the poor must be supported. The murderers of the Afro-Americans must be punished.

The WFTU calls its affiliated organisations in every corner of the world to participate in the WFTU Campaign by taking pictures in groups, submit solidarity statements to the US embassies and take any support initiatives they can.

The WFTU Secretariat