



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## Workers Mahapadav before Parliament

9 – 11 November, 2017

(Report page 5)



CITU President K. Hemalata and General Secretary Tapan Sen addressing the huge Workers Mahapadav on Parliament Street in New Delhi, jointly held by 10 Central Trade Unions and Independent National Federations.



CITU National Secretary and General Secretary of its All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers A. R. Sindhu addressing the Mahapadav on the concluding day attended by huge number of women scheme workers.

## **Condolence**

### **Homage to Comrade Sukomal Sen**



In a condolence message, CITU has expressed its profound grief at the passing away of Comrade Sukomal Sen at a hospital in Kolkata on 22 November, at the age of 83, after long ailments. He left behind his wife and two sons. He was a stalwart of the trade union movement in the country.

Comrade Sen was the founder-leader of All India State Government Employees Federation (AISGEF), its General Secretary during 1982 – 2008, Senior Vice Chairman till his demise and was the founder editor of its organ - *Employees Forum* - for over three decades. He was a member CITU Working Committee, Vice President and later as permanent invitee in the Secretariat till his demise.

Comrade Sen made significant contribution in international T.U. movement and was the General Secretary of Trade Union International Public & Allied Services (TUI-P&AS) of WFTU during 1996 – 2009.

He was a scholarly writer and was the author of several books including *The Working Class in India - History of Emergence of Movement (1830-2000)* (which has been translated in several languages), *The History of All India State Government Employees Federation, International Working Class Movement - Dynamics of Class Struggle vs. Class Collaboration* outlining the history of WFTU since its foundation in 1945 to 2011; and was regular contributor to various journals in India and abroad.

Comrade Sukomal Sen led an active Communist life remaining steadfast in his ideological commitment. He was a Central Committee member of CPI(M) for decades and as its ex-officio member till his demise. He played a leading role in championing the cause of working people in the Parliament during 1982 – 1994 as a Member of Rajya Sabha.

The body of the departed leader was brought at CITU West Bengal state centre where several trade union leaders paid respectful homage to him. On behalf of CITU national centre its secretary A. R. Sindhu with secretary Usha Rani placed CITU flag and wreath. His body was donated to Calcutta Medical College for medical research as per his wish.

In Comrade Sukomal Sen's demise, the country lost a stalwart of working class movement, scholar, visionary and a great teacher and is an irreparable loss in present physical and ideological offensives against the working class. CITU dipped its flag at its centre at BTR Bhawan and conveyed heartfelt condolence to all his comrades and bereaved family members.

#### **Condolences from International T.U. Movement**

**PAME:** "PAME had the honor to work with him, in many cases within the lines of WFTU. We also had the opportunity to welcome him in Athens during the 16th Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

On behalf of the class-oriented trade union movement of Greece, of PAME, we express our condolences to his comrades and his family . "

**TUI:** "Comrade Sukomal, as General Secretary of All India State Government Employees Federation and General Secretary of TUI PS&A of WFTU, for many years has contributed consistently to organizing the struggle of the workers not only in India but internationally.

We express our condolences to his family and to All India State Government Employees Federation."

## WORKING CLASS

DECEMBER 2017

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# Clarion Call to all CITU Activists

Moody's mood elevator for 'Ease of Doing Business' of Narendra Modi government was hugely propagated by the government and the corporate media. It shows the desperation of Modi government to cover up the impact of its policy deficiencies revealed in other data of deterioration in human development indices; rise in infant mortality rates, hunger deaths, price rise, unemployment; closures, jobloss and fall in production, export, investment etc.

Two massive programmes in October end – November: beginning of a united people's movement on 30 October of Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan; 3 days Workers Mahapadav with lakhs of workers and employees participating and 2 days huge Kisan Sansad in New Delhi before the Parliament set the tone of future movement on different sections of people's rights and livelihood, for people's unity against communal attacks and in defence of democratic space of opposition - all of which are under attack by the communal – corporate dispensation at the Centre. Every section has separate and joint agenda of action in coming months.

The situation demands the trade union activists to engage in manyfold activities on issues and in intensity. CITU activists have to play key role in all these movements.

This is the call to all activists in CITU unions, federations and units to rise to the occasion and fulfill their historical responsibility.

## Mahapadav: the Last Journey

Three valiant CITU workers died on attending the Mahapadav



Homage to Comrade Musthafa



Comrade Bachan Mohapatra

CITU expressed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members and the comrades in the unions of three valiant workers of CITU – Comrade Musthafa of Karnataka, Comrade Bachan Mohapatra of Odisha and Comrade Venkatesh of Maharashtra who died on their way to / from the Workers Mahapadav in New Delhi.

### Comrade Musthafa

The last journey of Comrade Musthafa (35), who died of heart attack at New Delhi railway station after participating in the Mahapadav on 11 November, took place in his village Dhanapur in Bidar district of Karnataka. He was a BSNL contract worker and member of its CITU union. BSNLEU attended to requirements of medical attention and carrying the body to his village in Karnataka.

After cremation, a condolence meeting was attended by his family members; trade union leaders, workers and activists coming from all over the district including CITU state president S. Varalakshmi, general secretary of BSNL contract workers state federation Mahantesh, AIDWA state leader K S Lakshmi, CPI(M) district secretary Sagar Shambhu and other district leaders of BSNLEU, CITU and its unions. Later, all the leaders went to Comrade Musthafa's house, met his family members, conveyed condolences and assured their continued support.

### Comrade Bachan Mohapatra

Comrade Bachan Mohapatra died in a railway accident at Pendra Road railway station in Chhattisgarh on 12 November on his way back from participating in the Workers Mahapadav in Delhi. CITU Chhattisgarh state committee extended help to Odisha state committee in recovering his dead body and bringing to Rourkela.

Comrade Bachan Mohapatra was the secretary of Rourkela Contractor Workers Union (CITU) and a member of CPI(M)'s Rourkela local committee in Odisha. Large number of leaders and workers of CITU and of CPI(M) paid respectful homage to Comrade Bachan Mohapatra including CITU state general secretary Bishnu Mohanty at Sramik Bhawan, the CITU Rourkela office, and at the Party's office at AKG Bhawan at Saktinagar on 14 November.

### Comrade Venkatesh

Comrade Venkatesh, a CITU activist in Sholapur, died of an accident at Ahmednagar on 9 November on his way to participate in the Mahapadav in New Delhi. CITU district and state committee of Maharashtra attended to his cremation and condolence meeting and meeting the family members.

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# The Mahapadav

Challenging the corporate-communal dispensation of BJP-led Modi government, attacking on the rights and livelihood of the working class and other toiling sections with divisive and diversionary programmes; hundreds of thousands of workers from all over the country assembled at Parliament Street in 3 days of Mahapadav on 9-11 November 2017 in a massive display of working class and people's unity and their resolve to fight back these attacks. This was the united trade unions major programme after two successful countrywide strikes in 2015 and 2016, both on 2 September, after Narendra Modi became the prime minister.

Responding enthusiastically to the call of 10 central trade unions (CTUs) and independent national federations the workers came from all states and union territories and from all organised and unorganised sectors and industries and joined in the biggest ever workers assembly before the Parliament. Several non-affiliated state federations and unions also joined. The workers had been reaching Delhi on all three days. Because of late running of the trains there was day long inflow of workers on all three days and some could not join even on arrival. They came by rail and by all sorts of road transports. On 3<sup>rd</sup> day, there was huge participation of women scheme workers as was decided by their federations.

The main issues and demands were Rs.18000 as minimum wage; pension to all; equal pay for equal work and regularisation; scheme workers demands of recognition as 'worker', minimum wage, social security and increase in remuneration; to check price rise; to resolve unemployment; against labour laws amendments; against privatisation of PSUs; FDI in defence, rail and insurance and against communal and divisive policies.

The Mahapadav was being held daily from 10 a.m. till evening. The leaders presided and addressed the workers each day, from the raised platform near the police barricade, in three sessions – first and last sessions by the leaders of CTUs and in between session by the leaders of national federations. The national leaders who addressed the Mahapadav include INTUC president Dr. G. Sanjiva Reddy and general secretaries - Gurudas Dasgupta (AITUC), H.S. Sidhu (HMS), Tapan Sen (CITU), G. Devarajan (TUCC), Manali (SEWA), Rajiv Dimri (AICCTU), M. Shanmugam (LPF), Ashok Ghosh (UTUC) - Satyawan from AIUTUC and others. Other CITU leaders who addressed the Mahapadav include national secretaries A.R. Sindhu and Usha Rani, Haryana state general secretary Jaibhagawan, construction workers federation general secretary Debanjan Chakravorty and Maharashtra state president Dr. D. L. Karad.

National leaders who presided include Ashok Singh of INTUC, AITUC president Ramendra Kumar, HMS president Raja Sridhar, CITU president Dr. K. Hemalata, R.K. Sharma of AIUTUC, Naren Chatterjee of TUCC, Sonia of Sewa, Santosh Rai of AICCTU, Subbaraman of LPF and of UTUC Shatrujit Singh and others. Other CITU leaders who presided include national secretariat members - S. Varalaksmi, Raghunath Singh, Anadi Sahu, M. Saibabu and K. O. Habib - Madhya Pradesh state general secretary Promode Pradhan and Bihar state president Deepak Bhattacharya.

Leaders of the national federations who addressed the Mahapadav include Shiv Gopal Mishra, general secretary of All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF); Raghavaiah, general secretary of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR); Venkatachalam, general secretary of All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA); Subhash Lamba, additional general secretary of All India State Government Employees Federation (AISGEF) and secretary of Electricity Employees' Federation of India (EEFI), K.K. Divakaran, general secretary of All India Road Transport Workers'

Federation (AIRTWF), C Sreekumar, general secretary of All India Defence Employees' Federation (AIDEF) and several others.

On concluding day a declaration was placed and supported by national leaders on future programmes including campaign, district level Satyagraha / courting arrest, sectoral strikes, protest as and when anti-workers anti-people proposal in union budget and preparation for indefinite general strike of the workers. The declaration was adopted unanimously.

## **Declaration of Workers Mahapadav**

### Central Trade Unions Call Upon the Working Class

- **Reverse the Anti-Worker, Anti-People and Anti-National Policies**
- **District Level Satyagraha in Last Week of January, 2018**
- **Sector-wise Joint Strike against Privatisation**

The central trade unions heartily congratulate the working class of the country for their overwhelming and enthusiastic response to the unprecedented three day joint Mahapadav near Parliament on 9-11 November 2017. The exemplary discipline exhibited by the workers, from different states and different organisations, during the entire duration of the three days Mahapadav was highly significant and noteworthy. The massive participation of women workers including scheme workers, vendors, domestic workers, construction and home based workers as well as large number of young workers was another significant feature of the Mahapadav.

Lakhs of workers from all over the country representing all the sectors of our economy have demonstrated their anger against the anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national policies being pursued by the BJP led government at the Centre. The Mahapadav has also once again displayed the determination of the working class to intensify the united struggle brushing aside the machinations of the communal divisive forces trying to disrupt their unity.

The central trade unions deplore the attitude of the BJP led government in totally ignoring the sufferings of the workers due to its policies and its stubborn insistence in going ahead with the very same disastrous policies. In such a situation the central trade unions have no other option but to intensify their struggle to reverse the anti-worker anti-people anti-national policies of the BJP government to force their reversal.

Towards this objective, in the light of our 8 August, 2017 National Convention of workers held at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi the central trade unions call upon the entire working class of the country to prepare for a prolonged agitation including strike. If the Government does not change its attitude, the CTUs will be forced to explore for the countrywide national indefinite strike. In the meanwhile, prolonged agitations and actions will continue in the next phase of our united trade union movement. As a follow-up of this workers/employees' 3 days padav, we take following activities in the coming months:

- Complete joint district level conventions by the first week of January 2018;
- District level 'Satyagraha' in the last week of January; the common date for all districts to be decided by the state level joint meeting of central trade unions and industrial federations;
- Sectoral / industry level joint strike whenever the government takes measures at privatisation;
- Protest actions on the day of presentation of Union Budget if it contains anti-worker measures; and
- Central trade unions to meet soon after presentation of Union Budget to plan future course of action.

**INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, LPF, UTUC; and  
Independent Federations and Associations**

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## **Massive Mahapadav's call to Working Class**

### **Intensify Struggle to Reverse Anti-National Policies of Modi Government**

- Hemalata -

The unprecedented joint trade union Mahapadav of workers concluded in the evening of 11 November 2017 with a clarion call to the working class of the country to intensify the struggle against the anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national policies of the BJP led government.

#### **Call of Mahapadav**

The huge mass of workers who gathered from all over the country and from all sectors of the economy enthusiastically endorsed the unanimous call of the leadership of the joint trade union movement, made in the light of the 8 August 2017 national convention, to prepare for an indefinite countrywide general strike if the government does not change tack and heed the voice of the working class. The trade unions decided to chalk out a prolonged course of agitations and actions towards that objective.

The string of actions will start with district level joint conventions to be completed by the first week of January 2018 followed by joint Satyagraha / courting arrest at the district headquarters in the last week of January. The common date for the courting of arrest in all districts in the state will be decided by the joint meeting of the state leadership of the trade unions. In case of any anti worker measures being announced in the Union budget, joint protest demonstrations will be held on the same day all over the country. The central trade unions will meet soon after the presentation of the Union Budget and decide upon the next course of action. Along with these programmes, the central trade unions (CTUs) also decided to go into joint industry / sectoral strike whenever the government takes measures at privatisation. The national federations of scheme workers affiliated to the CTUs will go on strike before the presentation of the Union budget on their own demands. The date of the strike will be decided in their joint meeting.

#### **Significant Features**

3 days Mahapadav was significant in many ways. This was the first time that ten CTUs and independent industrial federations jointly organised dharna in the national capital continuously for 3 days mobilising tens of thousands of workers on each day. The participation of women workers, not only the scheme workers, but also from other sections like beedi, construction, domestic workers, street vendors, home based workers etc was very huge, particularly on the third day. The participation of young workers was also remarkable.

Another significant feature is the participation of several state level trade unions. Some of them are part of the state level joint trade union platforms in states like Kerala, Telangana etc. In addition around 3000 transport workers, owners cum drivers of trucks etc from different states, who are not affiliated to any CTU participated at the initiative of the All India Road Transport Workers' Federation. The workers displayed extraordinary resolve to participate in the Mahapadav overcoming many difficulties. The air pollution in Delhi received wide coverage in the media all over the country. Delhi's description as a 'toxic gas chamber' with a situation of 'public health emergency' created scare, particularly among those coming from the southern states. The banning of demonstrations

## **The Mahapadav**

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and mobilisations at Jantar Mantar by the National Green Tribunal also raised questions on whether the Mahapadav will be allowed at all. Many trains were running inordinately late and several were cancelled. Thousands of workers, including women workers from remote villages who travelled all the way to the nearest railway station had to go back after finding that the train they were to travel was cancelled. Thousands refused to go back despite knowing that their train was late. They just wanted to participate in the Mahapadav even for a little while. On each of the 3 days thousands arrived at the venue just as the dharna was about to conclude or after it was adjourned for the day. Around thousand women workers reached Delhi in the night of 11 November!

### **Attempts to Create Confusion**

Attempts were made to create confusion among the workers. BMS - which deserted the joint trade union movement on the eve of the countrywide general strike on 2 September 2015, the first one after the BJP led Modi government came to power, certifying that the government was positive to the demands of the workers - gave a call for a rally in the national capital on 17 November. Rumours were floated that the Mahapadav had been cancelled.

The government, which had been totally ignoring the 12 point charter of demands of the trade unions during the last over 2 years, called a meeting on 3 November 2017 sending a notice of less than 48 hours. It did not invite the INTUC, one of the major trade unions and a constituent of the joint movement. When the trade unions protested and refused to attend the meeting unless INTUC was also invited, the government called another meeting but on the same day when 3 other central trade unions were called to depose before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour in Mumbai. After the trade unions again protested against the casual attitude of the Ministry of Labour, ultimately the meeting was fixed on the evening of 7 November. But the government had nothing to offer. The trade unions stuck to their programme. The workers brushed aside all these machinations to confuse, divide and disrupt their unity and participated in the Mahapadav in large numbers.

### **The Workers Discipline**

The discipline displayed by the workers, belonging to different organisations and different states, during the entire 3 days' Mahapadav was exemplary. Majority of the workers sat throughout the day and showed eagerness to hear the speakers – not less than 30 of them, in 3 sessions, every day! They responded with enthusiasm whenever a call was given to intensify the struggle.

### **The Corporate Media & Social Media**

However all this was of no consequence to the corporate media. The corporate controlled mainstream print and electronic media chose to black out the Mahapadav and the demands of the workers, the backbone of our economy. All that they could capture was some poor street vendors '*doing hectic business selling shoes and books and the long lines near the public toilets!*'

But the Mahapadav and the issues raised by it received wide attention in the social media and some pro-people television channels. Several teams, active in the social media, talked to the workers and union leaders and uploaded them in the websites.

### **Tapan Sen's Conclusion: Carry the Message to the People**

As Tapan Sen, general secretary of CITU said in the concluding session, the working class

cannot expect support from the corporate media to its struggle against the neoliberal policies, the very same policies that are meant to benefit the big domestic and foreign corporates and being implemented at their behest. The lakhs of workers, who have come not only from the cities and towns all over the country, but also from its remotest corners, have to carry the message of the Mahapadav to the workers and all sections of the toiling people.

## **Fraternal Support & Solidarity**

The struggle and the demands of the workers also received huge support from various organisations within the country as well as from outside. The two major international organisations of the working class - the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) sent messages of solidarity. In addition, national trade union organisations from different countries including Greece, Nepal etc expressed solidarity. The joint platform of over 100 kisan organisations and several women's organisations came out in support of the Mahapadav. 50 eminent personalities including writers, university professors, scientists, researchers, artists and social workers, signed a letter to the Prime Minister demanding that the issues raised by the joint movement of the workers be addressed immediately. There were many more such expressions of support to the struggle of the workers.

## **Role of CITU**

CITU had a highly visible presence in the Mahapadav. The CITU centre and all its state committees and industrial federations made effective preparations. The three months duration since the decision of the national joint convention on 8 August were utilised for intensive campaign among the workers with the objective of '*reaching the unreached*'. In addition to the joint leaflets and posters, lakhs of booklets, pamphlets and leaflets were published by the CITU committees in local languages. In addition sectoral unions and federations of CITU published lakhs of leaflets and booklets linking up the sector specific issues of the workers with the neoliberal policies being pursued by successive governments at the centre, whether led by the BJP or the Congress. Jathas, public meetings, gate meetings, street corner meetings, mohalla meetings etc were held across the country in which lakhs of workers participated.

## **Growing Discontent and the Task Ahead**

The three days Mahapadav makes one thing certain. Discontent against the policies being pursued by the government is growing among all sections of the working class – unorganised sector workers, organised sector workers, those in the public sector and in the private sector, the scheme workers, contract workers and all others. Even large sections of the middle class employees, who have voted for BJP, are becoming disillusioned with the government's policies.

It has shown that the workers are ready to fight. It is necessary is to make them aware that alternatives to the disastrous neoliberal policies exist; to make them aware that it is the working class which has to lead the struggle for such an alternative; and create confidence among them that they can do it through their organised strength and by uniting with other sections of toiling people like the peasants and agricultural workers.

That is the task ahead for a class based trade union like CITU. The magnificent success of the Mahapadav and the role played by CITU in making it such a success increases its responsibility in discharging this task.

## INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY



**WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS**

Class oriented - uniting - democratic - modern - independent - internationalist!

Athens, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### Solidarity statement of the WFTU G.S. on the three days' mass action in India

On behalf of the class-oriented trade union movement and the 92 million workers-members of the World Federation of Trade Unions, I express our sincere and hearty support and solidarity for the great mobilization of the Indian working class and its trade union movement.

Hundreds of workers from all sectors and regions of India are proving the power of the workers and show the way of militant struggles, participating in the three-day demonstration on 9-11 November 2017. The unity of the working class in the conscious, mass and relentless struggles is the only way out from the current aggression. This situation is caused by the unequal economic growth of the capitalist states, which is developed on the basis of profit and exploitation.

The World Federation of Trade Unions fully supports your struggle against the anti-labour and neoliberal policies and practices of the Indian government and the bourgeois class. We support your demands for enhanced minimum wages, for employment, social security for all, and against the anti-worker amendment to labour laws and privatization. We stand by the side of the struggling Indian workers for the full acceptance and implementation of their fair demands in favor of the interests of the popular strata, the workers, the farmers and the ordinary people.

The WFTU salutes the decisive and proud answer of your trade union movement and affirms that the working class all over the world can rely on the support and solidarity of the international class-oriented trade union movement against the capitalistic barbarity and the man by man exploitation.

GEORGE MAVRIKOS,  
WFTU General Secretary



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### Solidarity with the 3 day National Protest of the Workers of India

The All Workers Militant Front-PAME, which represents the class trade union movement of Greece, expresses its solidarity with India's three-day mobilization of 9-11 November.

Indian workers go on a three-day mobilization in front of the Parliament, in New Delhi where millions of workers from all over the country will protest. Trade unions are demanding the satisfaction of the demands they have made and claimed the last years (such as minimum wage and pensions for all, universal social security and jobs for the unemployed) with General Strikes and mobilizations, with the pioneering action of the WFTU affiliates in India.

PAME expresses its support and solidarity with this great mobilization of Indian workers and demands the satisfaction of their fair demands.

Athens, Greece, November 9 2017

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## CITU Calls Countrywide Protest Day against Price Rise

CITU gave a call to its units, federations and unions to launch countrywide independent campaign at every industrial centre, city, town and rural areas involving all toiling sections against continuing price rise. The campaign will culminate in the *Protest Day against Price Rise* on 13 December, 2017 by staging demonstrations and burning effigy of Modi government. In a statement on 16 November CITU said that despite government's fraudulent showcasing of occasional fall of price indices; in reality, the prices of all essential commodities including food grains, vegetables, transport, health services, medicines, education etc have continuously been increasing.

"*Modi government's policies and failures are responsible for price rise.*" Prices are not just increasing, but are made to increase as government's policy drive is to benefit the middlemen, big traders, blackmarketeers and speculators and for 'ease of doing business', which became synonymous to 'ease of looting the people'. Under Modi's rule, the country's position is up in "ease of doing business" index and down in "hunger" index.

Price of petroleum and diesel has been increasing in regular intervals and LPG subsidy is being cut despite decline and/or virtual stagnation of crude oil price in international market having cascading effect on prices of all essential commodities. Demonetisation followed by GST has been adding to price-rise.

The PDS is made to virtually collapse. Imposition of various conditionalities, including Aadhar linkage on everything is depriving large section of poor people from PDS benefits mocking at the Food Security Act.

Farmers are not getting the remunerative price of their produce which is much below the ruling prices of food grains and other agri-products in the market. The government is adding to miseries by depriving proper minimum wage and by drastic cut in welfare expenditure including on MGNREGA as reflected in the sharp decline in work days available throughout the country under scheme.

### 9.2 Crores MNREGA Workers Not Paid Wages; Centre Not Releasing Funds

Wage payment under MGNREGA to nearly 9.2 crores rural workers have not been made in 19 States as on 31 October, 2017 amounting to Rs.3,066 crores as Central Government is not releasing funds. Under MNREGA payment of wage has to be made within 15 days. The worker is entitled to compensation for delayed payment. (*From; Social media*)

Without Comment

### The Down Slide

"The government's 'Make in India' drive is in trouble. It aims to increase the share of manufacturing from 16% of GDP to 25% by 2022, creating 100 million jobs. Alas, industrial growth has been weak in Modi's three years in office, the investment rate has fallen, formal employment growth has been miserable, and exports have stagnated." (*From: The Economic Times, 22 November, 2017*)

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# **Ranking games and the woes of workers**

- K R Shyam Sundar and Rahul Suresh Sapkal -

Labour pays the price, as the Government panders solely to businesses in order to earn plaudits from the World Bank

India's jump from 130<sup>th</sup> (2016) to 100<sup>th</sup> (2017) rank in the '*Ease of Doing Business*' (EDB) exercise by the World Bank has at once been received with celebration and disbelief (given that the economy is barely recovering from the deleterious effects of demonetization and GST). Employment growth is dithering and companies in the telecom and IT sectors have been laying off workers.

While the bureaucracy needs to be prodded to ease business processes, should this logic of deregulation be extended to labour in the name employment generation? The World Bank is known for endorsing labour market deregulation.

## **Political economy of ranking**

The ranking exercises are important because pressure groups lobby for change in regulatory policies, and countries pride in responding to them. The report for 2018 acknowledges that 119 of the 190 countries enacted at least one regulatory reform, surely for being regarded as more business friendly. Although labour market regulation has not been ranked since 2010 due to a chorus of criticism, it figures in the regulatory mindset of World Bank.

The problem is that business and ruling parties ignore the marked contrast in the rankings on components of social and economic progress. While India has "arguably" got a good rating on business ease, in other realms it fares badly. The Global Wage Report of ILO shows income distribution in India in poor light. The highest-paid top 10 per cent of income groups receive almost 43 per cent of total wages paid to all employees, whereas the lowest-paid bottom 50 per cent income groups receive only 17 per cent. India was rated 149 out of 152 countries on social spending, 91 on progressive taxation and 86 on labour rights by the recent policy report of Development Finance International and Oxfam. The Labour Rights Index measured by the International Trade Unions Council has placed India on worst ranking (indicating no guarantee of workers' rights) for three consecutive years.

While the EDB seeks to ensure that the small and medium firms do business unshackled by bureaucratic hassles, it has the power to influence a race to the bottom in deregulation, between countries and States. Some countries like Rwanda have formed a bureaucracy to manage their business profile. It is not surprising that the Centre has, under pressure from World Bank, initiated a domestic business ease ranking exercise.

## **Ease of doing vs labour rights**

It is significant, even disturbing, that the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) in the commerce and industries ministry has replaced the labour ministry in dealing with matters concerning labour laws. DIPP has issued detailed "regulations" to deregulate the labour market in

States. Now, State labour departments are quoting the World Bank instead of ILO even as they proudly announce liberalisation of labour inspections for “ease of doing business”!

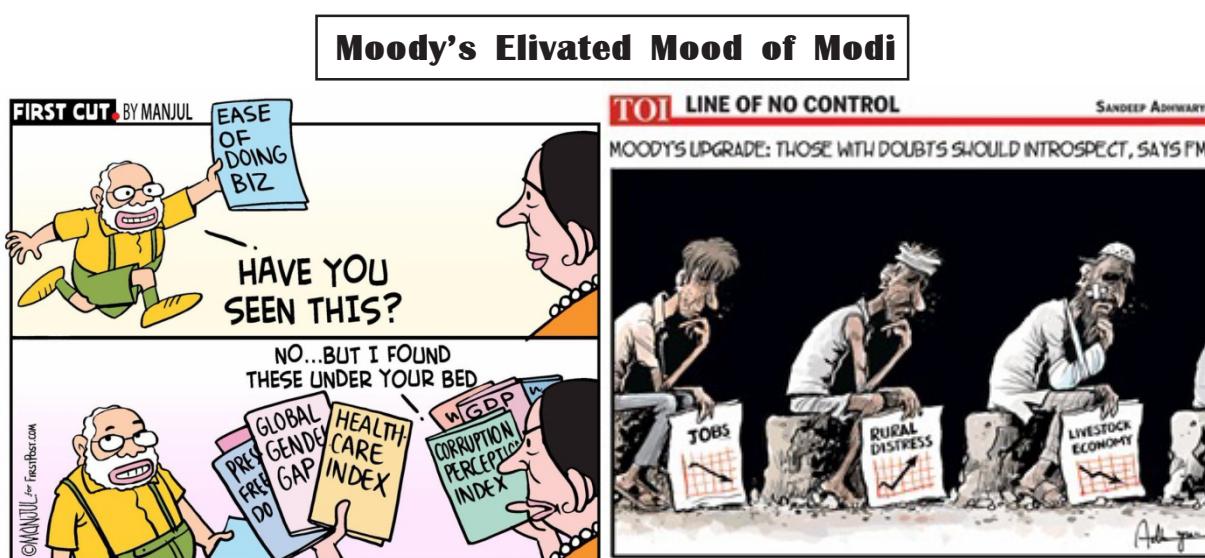
Borrowing from product market deregulation, labour departments have introduced “deemed” registrations and renewals to user enterprises and contract workers if not granted within a given tenure and conduct post-registration inspections for compliance.

But they show relatively far less interest in extending labour-friendly reforms in terms of granting deemed union registration of workers or reforming the bureaucracy in helping workers’ claims of social security benefits. Risk-based inspections (without even a reliable data base), machine-regulated inspection orders (to remove the rent-seeking element of “discretion” in labour inspectors), third party auditing, removal of unannounced inspections, self-certification, etc have been designed by many States to facilitate “ease of doing business”.

In liberalising labour inspection systems India has violated the ILO Labour Inspection Convention (081) which it has ratified — the convention states that the establishment should be inspected as often as possible and at any time even without prior intimation.

Worse, legislative reforms have expanded the pie of informality by relieving firms and contractors from legal purview. On the other hand, more workers remain outside the purview of benefits and regulation. Ease of doing business has little use for social welfare.

(*Sundar is a professor at XLRI, Xavier School of Management; Sapkal is an assistant professor at Maharashtra National Law University, Mumbai*)



### **Cancer is caused by Sins committed in past life: Assam’s BJP Minister**

Assam’s Health, Education and Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, while distributing appointment letters to 248 school teachers at a function in Guwahati recently, said that cancer and such other life-threatening diseases are caused by sins committed in past life. According to him, all cancer patients in India are suffering because they committed sins in their past lives. Remember, he is Assam’s ‘Health’ and ‘Education’ minister. (From: *India Express*, 22 November, 2017)

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## **Central Trade Unions Demand Independent Probe & Adequate Compensation To NTPC, Unchahar Accident Victims**

The joint meeting of CITU and other central trade unions, held on 4 November 2017 at New Delhi, expressed serious shock at the major accident at the Unchahar project of NTPC in Uttar Pradesh on 1 November 2017 killing 33 employees till 3 November 2017.

The death toll rose to 43 till 10 November and several others are still in critical conditions in the hospitals of Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. Hundreds of workers including contract workers have been seriously injured, many of them sustaining more than 70 per cent burns and still battling for life.

In a statement issued on that day the central trade unions expressed their deep and heartfelt condolences to the families of all those killed in this serious accident.

The statement said that various reports including statements from workers indicate gross negligence of authorities resulting in the explosion of the Boiler. There are reports of snags appearing in the operation of the Boiler compelling the management to operate well below capacity immediately prior to accident. The accident also exposes serious deficit in putting in place safety measures at the workplace to prevent accidents.

The central trade unions demanded:

- High level inquiry into the accident by independent agency to identify the reasons as well as to fix the responsibility in order to bring the erring personnel to book besides ensuring measures to prevent re-occurrence of such fatal happenings;
- Medical treatment till complete cure of all those injured including the contract workers must be ensured by NTPC;
- Not less than Rs50 lakhs compensation be paid to the families of all the deceased employees;
- Declared monetary compensation to those severely injured should be enhanced multiple times; and
- Employment in permanent roll of the Company should be given to the dependents of those deceased and also incapacitated owing to injury including those among contract workers.

### **Race for PM's Pat**

Nitish Kumar government in Bihar is in full speed to implement PM Modi's Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and ordered the school teachers to take photographs of persons (male or female) defecating in the open. In a race to declare Open Defecation Free within 31 December, 2017, government issued specific orders to the teachers for this in Muzaffarpur and Aurangabad districts. Teachers of Aurangabad district protested it being against human dignity and brought the issue in the fore.

*(From: media reports)*

# PEASANTS' STRUGGLE

## Kisan Sansad before Parliament

Under the banner of All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), the biggest platform of 184 peasants' organisations in the country, tens of thousands of farmers came from almost all states in India to join the Kisan Mukti Sansad (*Parliament for Peasants' Liberation*) in the national capital, New Delhi on 20-21 November. Kisan Mukti Sansad was preceded by months-long Kisan Mukti Yatra covering more than 10,000 kms and holding more than 500 public meetings in 19 States campaigning for remunerative prices and freedom from debt burden.

On 20 November, the farmers brought out a huge March in a rainbow procession with red, green, blue, yellow and pink flags from Ramlila Maidan on 20 November morning and winding their way through Connaught place reached Parliament Street police barricade and sat in a massive Sansad on peasants' issues. Thousands of farmers also reached in procession from other locations including Ambedkar Bhavan, Gurudwara Rakabganj and railway stations. All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) contingent in the procession and Sansad was the largest.

The March from Ramlila Maidan was led by the leaders of kisan organisations including AIKS leaders - president Dr Ashok Dhawale; vice president Amra Ram; joint secretaries Vijoo Krishnan, K K Raghesh and Badal Saroj; finance secretary P. Krishnaprasad and the state leaders. Others who led the March included AIKSCC convener V. M. Singh; Medha Patkar of Nramada Bachao Andolan; Yogendra Yadav and Avik Saha of Jai Kisan Andolan; Rajaram Singh, Prem Singh and Kartik Rai of AIKMS; Ashish Mittal and Chandrashekhar of AIKKMS; Raju Shetty of Swabhiman Shetkari Sanghatana and others.

The Kisan Sansad started with tributes to the farmer martyrs of police firing at Mandsaur and other places, the farmers who committed suicide and the farmers of Yavatmal who died due to pesticide poisoning.

Before the Kisan Sansad two Bills were presented – ***Farmers' Freedom from Debt Bill, 2017*** by AIKS general secretary Hannan Mollah, ex-MP and ***Farmers' Right to Assured Remunerative Prices for Agricultural Produce Bill, 2017*** by Raju Shetty, MP. The Bills will be discussed in every State with a drafting committee visiting the States and will be tabled in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha after incorporating necessary amendments. After getting the amendments from across the country, both these Bills will be finalised by two standing committees headed by Hannan Mollah and Raju Shetty.

Side by side Mahila Kisan Sansad with 543 women kisans was also held with Kavitha Kuruganti introducing the objectives of the Mahila Kisan Sansad and addressed by Medha Patkar. The Sansad discussed the grim situation of farmers, especially women farmers. There were several widows, mothers, sisters and daughters of farmers who had been forced to commit suicide due to indebtedness. Some of them spoke about their plight, but at the same time they courageously declared their resolve to combat the disastrous policies of the government that had led to the suicide of farmers. Women activists also addressed including Sudha Sudararaman of AIDWA and

Annie Raja of NFIW. The Mahila Kisan Sansad gave its consent to table two crucial Bills before the Kisan Sansad that followed.

Kisan Sansad also felicitated the AIKS vice president Amra Ram, ex-MLA for the historic victory of the Kisan struggle in Rajasthan as well as Raju Shetty, MP for quitting the NDA and coming out against the Narendra Modi led BJP government's betrayal of promises made to farmers.

Addressing the Sansad, Dr Ashok Dhawale spoke on BJP government betraying the farmers and called it the most anti-farmer government in independent India. He condemned the BJP regime for giving loan waivers of lakhs of crores of rupees to a handful of corporates while denying it to crores of farmers in distress. He also said that neither the Congress nor the BJP governments at the centre had implemented the recommendation of MSP at one and a half times the cost of production, made by the National Commission of Farmers that was headed by Dr M S Swaminathan. Narendra Modi and the BJP had, in fact, betrayed their election promise to do so. He said that the fighting unity of the farmers will defeat both the repressive tactics of the anti-people government and its diabolical conspiracy to divide the people on communal lines. Amra Ram and AIKS Maharashtra State general secretary Dr Ajit Nawale spoke on the victory of the peasant struggles in Rajasthan and Maharashtra respectively.

V. M. Singh, Yogendra Yadav, Atul Anjaan, Medha Patkar, Sunilam, Pratibha Shinde, Rajaram Singh, Kodihalli Chandrashekhar, Ashish Mittal, Satyavan, Avik Saha, Kiran Bassa and other kisan leaders and activists addressed the Sansad. Leaders of different class and mass organisations including CITU president, general secretary and other office bearer were also went to Sansad to express solidarity.

Kisan Sansad decided to organise 2 months long countrywide campaign and public hearing, during 26 November – 26 January, on the two Bills and against the anti-farmer policies of the BJP government starting from Gujarat in November-end; followed by State level conventions; building united resistance at local level to ensure MSP on all crops and that debt-ridden farmers are not harassed by the banks and private money-lenders.

## **Killing of Ummar Khan**

### Rajasthan Government Ignores Supreme Court's Order



**AIKS delegation meets Ummar's family**

An AIKS delegation, led by its president Dr Ashok Dhawale with its other national leaders Vijoo Krishnan and P. Krishnaprasad; and Rajasthan Kisan Sabha leaders Chhagan Choudhury, Gurcharan Singh Morh, Nathilal Sharma, Rambo Hawaldar and Imam Assamohammed met the family members of Ummar Mohammed Khan, a poor dairy farmer and daily wage labourer at Ghatmika village in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan, on 17 November who was murdered by Gaurakshaks in Alwar in Rajasthan on 10 November.

The delegation found Ummar's family and entire village, mostly Muslims, as backward and poverty ridden. The livelihood support of the villagers is cow rearing and dairying. As milk is sold at low price, the entire village faces distress in general. Purchasing and selling cows are not legally banned in Rajasthan. When the villagers sell and purchase cows from households there is no system of receipts. Yet, without any complaint about cow theft, registering a case of cow smuggling against the victims underlines the prejudiced mindset of the police and administration.

Alwar hospital doctors claimed that Ummar's death was not due to firing and that no bullet was found in the body. Objected by the family members and the villagers, the police was forced to refer the body to Jaipur where the post mortem report confirmed death due to bullet injury!

The murder of Ummar took place at Gahankar village, the vehicle was found at Govindgarh and the body was found 15 km away on the railway track in Ramgarh. These show deliberate attempt by the culprit criminals to misguide the public as if Ummar's death was due to accident. The behaviour of the Alwar doctors is also under suspect. So far more than 30 persons died in such lynching by communal forces after Modi assumed power at the Centre. In the Pehlu Khan's case also the real culprits were left scot-free by BJP's Rajasthan government. Not a single paisa was given as compensation to the victim's family.

Despite Supreme Court order to the Central and State governments to deploy district nodal police officers to control the illegal activities of the so called cow vigilante groups and pay adequate compensation to victims of such violence, the BJP-led State and Central governments are not implementing these directions.

The delegation also met the Alwar S.P. and other police officials and demanded stringent action against the culprits. AIKS demanded immediately arrest of Ummar's killers; judicial probe of Ummar's murder; Rs. one crore compensation to Ummar's family and Rs.25 lakh each to those injured; governments to ensure cattle trade; amend cow protection Act to purchase unproductive animals paying market rate; and ban unlawful Gaurakshaks like organizations.

## **Again Police Firing on Farmers Demanding Remunerative Price**

BJP government's police in Maharashtra resorted to firing and lathi charge on the peacefully agitating hundreds of sugarcane farmers in Ahmednagar on 15 November seriously injuring 7 farmers requiring hospitalization.

The farmers are demanding remunerative price of sugarcane @ Rs 3100 per tonne and payment of accumulated dues from the private mill owners. The agitation by sugarcane farmers for remunerative price has been going on in several centres of Maharashtra during last few weeks. BJP State government did nothing and has now let loose the police on the agitating farmers, a AIKS statement on the same day stated. AIKS demanded urgent and adequate compensation and medical expenses to all injured farmers and to ensure remunerative price at one and a half times of the cost of production.

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# Hunger Deaths of Santoshi in Jharkhand

## AIKS delegation visited Karimati village in Simdega



An AIKS delegation led by its finance secretary P. Krishnaprasad with state Kisan Sabha leaders Surjeet Sinha, Prafulla Linda, Suphal Mahto and Birendra Kumar visited Karimati Village in Simdega district of Jharkhand on 10 November where Santoshi Kumari aged 11 years died due to starvation on 28 September 2017.

So far five starvation deaths were reported from Jharkhand. The other deaths were of Baidanath Ravi Das of Dhanbad, Rooplal Murmu of Mohanpur of Deoghar district, Suresh Oraon of Garhwa and Vinod Ravidas of Katras in Dhanbad district. Three of them are Adivasis. But, Jharkhand government is on denial mode and has been trying to suppress the seriousness of the issue.

The delegation met the family members of Santoshi including her mother Koyili Devi, grandmother, sister, uncle and many villagers. The family is not having a proper house and permanent income. They have only 12 decimal of land. The family gets daily labour only for 10/12 days in a month and wage @ Rs.100 for women and Rs.150 for men..

The family members said that Santoshi died death was caused due to starvation and refuted the chief minister's statement that she died of sickness. The Ration Card No:202006991124 in the name of Koyili Devi gives ample evidence that the family did not get ration since April 2017 and only after the death of the girl the family got ration of 21 kg of rice, 14 kg of wheat and 2 litre kerosene oil on 23 October 2017 from the dealer Arun Shah.

Jharkhand has about 2.5 crore PDS beneficiaries. As per official data, 11.30 lakhs card holders' names were removed from the list citing reason of having no Aadhaar linkage. The chief secretary issued order in March directing all district administrations to delete the names of PDS beneficiaries whose ration cards were not linked to Aadhaar. Around 385 of poor families belonging to Tribal, Dalit and Minority sections were denied by cancelling ration cards or by not renewing cards.

Santoshi Kumari's family has the Aadhaar card and their ration card was with the dealer. But the family was denied ration since April saying the biometric data was not available. How such failure of the administration could be justified for denying the right of food security to the people. It is criminal dereliction of duty and all responsible for the tragic death of the girl must be booked for culpable homicide.

AIKS demanded– To appoint a judicial commission to examine hunger deaths in Jharkhand and fix responsibilities; - the government constructs a house for the victim's family; - provide Rs.10 lakh compensation; and - Ensure permanent employment and family pension.

It was shocking and inhuman that after the incident the RSS-BJP activists in the village have continuously harassed and accused the members of the victim's family of maligning the state government's image and due to the insecurity they were forced to leave the village. It is positive that the local administration has pursued the family to come back and four security guards are posted there.

# **STATES**

## Odisha

### **Asha Workers Day-Night Dharna**

Under the banner of Odisha Asha Karmee Association of CITU, 3000 Asha workers, coming from different parts of the State, brought out procession from the railway station and, on reaching the State Assembly in Bhubaneswar, staged militant demonstration and sat in indefinite State level day-night relay dharna on 17 November which entered 6<sup>th</sup> day on 22 November before going to press. The union is agitating for their 20 points charter of demands which includes regularization as government employees, Rs.18,000 as minimum wage and till that time enhancement of incentives, social security including PF and pension, regular payment of wages etc.



Union's president R R Sarangi, general secretary Nalini Sahu and CITU state leaders Lambodr Nayak, Janardan Pati, Bishnu Mohanty, Dusmanata Das, Satyananda Behera, Ramesh Jena and others addressed the meeting. (*Inputs: Ramesh Jena*)

## Bihar

### **Indefinite Strike of Truck Workers and Operators**

The truck workers and operators of Bihar were on total indefinite strike since 15 November bringing truck operation in a grinding halt in the 38 districts of the State as thousands of trucks carrying goods including essential commodities were standing on the roadsides. The strikers brought out torchlight processions in different parts of the State during 17-19 November.

All India Road Transport Workers Federation (AIRTWF) extended support to demands and the strike and called upon its affiliated unions throughout the country to extend support and solidarity by staging demonstrations bringing out rallies and holding gate meetings.

The strike call was given jointly by AIRTWF, Bihar unit and Bihar Motor Transport Federation for 8 point demands mainly demanding withdrawal of 'Minor Mineral Rules', notified on 10 October 2017 by the State government, making online linkage compulsory for carrying such goods and having punitive clause including imprisonment in case of failure to do so; withdrawal of increased fees and penalties by the State government for registration; issuing license, permits, fitness certificate, insurance etc; and for withdrawal of Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill, 2017 pending before the Parliament.

A state level dharna was staged before the chief minister's office on 21 November joined transport workers coming from 25 districts which was inaugurated by CITU Bihar state general secretary Ganesh Sankar Singh and addressed by AICCTU state general secretary R. N. Jha, Patna Coordination Committee of Unions and Associations convener Manjul Kumar Das, construction union leader Nathun Jamadar and leaders of several transport workers unions.

A 5 member delegation of striking workers met the OSD of the chief minister and submitted a memorandum with 8 point demands. On assurance of a meeting with the chief minister the strike was postponed for next 10 days as per unanimous decision of the joint meeting.

(Inputs: Raj Kumar Jha)

## Punjab

### **Anganwadi Employees Staged Dharna across the State Demanding withdrawal of Government's Decision to end ICDS**



In front of Vidhan Sabha Speaker at Ropar



Amritsar



Ludhiana



Philour

Demanding withdrawal of Punjab government's decision to enroll children of 3-6 years of age in pre-primary classes in government primary schools to bring them out of present benefit of ICDS scheme; at the call of Anganwadi Mulajam Union (CITU), thousands Anganwadi workers and helpers staged dharna in front of the residences of the ruling Congress cabinet ministers, Vidhan Sabha speaker and MPs at Amritsar, Tarantaran, Dinanagar, Ropar, Khanna, Ludhiana, Bathinda, Patiala, Nabha, Sangrur, Mohali, Philaur and Fatehgarh Sahib.

The dharnas were addressed by all India president of Anganwadi federation AIFAWAH and CITU national secretary Usha Rani, union's state president Harjeet Kaur and general secretary Subhash Rani and CITU leaders including state general secretary Raghunath Singh.

## Kerala

### **Convention against Railway Privatisation**

United Railway Employees Forum, comprising of railway employees unions - DREU (CITU), AILRSA and AISMA – held a convention at Ernakulam against railway privatisation and privatisation of Ernakulam Junction railway station in particular. The convention was inaugurated by CITU state general secretary E. Kareem; paper was presented by DREU assistant general secretary Susobhanan and addressed by CITU state secretary K. N. Gopinath, Roy of the Confederation, M M Rolly of AILRSA and T. Vinu of AISMA. N Ravikumar Presided.

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# **Meeting of CBT of EPFO**

## **On Implementation of Supreme Court's judgement on 'Pensioners from Exempted Units'**

On 23 November, pensioners' organizations were staging demonstration outside the CBT meeting place in New Delhi. CITU representative in CBT and its national vice president, A. K. Padmanabhan addressing the demonstrators said that CITU has been demanding full implementation of Supreme Court's judgement and will continue to take up the issue in the CBT meeting.

Even before the meeting of CBT could start discussion on the circulated agenda, it became stormy and workers representatives severely criticized the EPFO for ignoring to put the 'issue of increased pension' as a separate agenda despite last meeting's decision.

Instead EPFO unilaterally issued circular on 31 May, 2017 on 'Pensioners from Exempted Units', who had paid contribution for full wages leading to protests and several petitions, pending in different High Courts. EPFO has filed a petition for transferring all these cases to Supreme Court.

After discussion, it was concluded that a separate meeting of CBT would be held in the first half of December to discuss on the issue of exempted units and related issues. Labour minister assured to meet the representatives of pensioners' organisations after the CBT meeting in December on this issue.

## **Accounting**

15% of corpus in EPFO is invested in the market through ETF. Accounting of this is on individual basis - 85% is shown in rupees and 15% as units along with its current market value. During August, 2015 - October 2017 period EPFO invested Rs.32,298.73 crores in ETF with average return of 21.87%. These investments are being handled by SBI Mutual Fund and UTI Mutual Fund. Those who get advances from EPF can also get these units encashed from EPFO at its current price.

## **Other Important Pending Issues**

Several issues which were raised by CITU are still kept pending which include – (i) On stopping recovery of commutation amount after full recovery from pension as was decided in the meeting on 11 March 2015 and was belatedly sent to labour department by EPFO only on 17 August, 2016 are still pending with the government despite raising it in the last meeting when labour secretary assured to look into it without delay. Yet, again there is no reference of this in the 'Agenda Papers'. - (ii) On increasing EDLI benefits was decided in the meeting of April 2017. It is the only beneficial decision by CBT in the recent period. The decision was to have a minimum amount of insurance of Rs.2.5 lakhs and a loyalty payment. - (iii) On ESI linked medical benefits to pensioners and increasing threshold limits of wage ceiling. – (iv) On PF for scheme workers. – (v) On PF for railway porters; railway says they are not their workers; injustice has been pointed out and reconsideration was demanded.

The meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> November began with homage to Comrade Sachdeva, long time member of CBT from AITUC. CBT also welcomed the new member from AITUC, Ramendra Kumar, president AITUC. The meeting was presided over by the new labour minister.

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# What Supreme Court Repeatedly Said On Minimum Wages

1. **Constitution Bench in *Express Newspapers (P) Ltd v U.O.I.*, 1959 SCR 12**, “*It must, however, be remembered that whereas the bare minimum or subsistence wage would have to be fixed irrespective of the capacity of the industry to pay.*”
2. **Constitution Bench in *U. Unichoyi v State of Kerala*, AIR 1962 SC 12** said, “*The Act (The Minimum Wages Act, 1948) contemplates that minimum wage rates should be fixed in the scheduled industries with the dual object of providing sustenance and maintenance of the worker and his family and preserving his efficiency as a worker.*”
3. **Supreme Court in *Chandra Bhavan Boarding & Lodging v State of Mysore*, (1969) 3 SCC 84** said, “*it is the duty of the State to see that at least minimum wages are paid to the employees irrespective of the capacity of the industry or unit to pay the same.*” And “*We are not convinced that the rates prescribed would adversely affect the industry or even a small unit therein. If they do, then the industry or the unit as the case may be has no right to exist. Freedom of trade does not mean freedom to exploit.*”
4. **3-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court in *Kamani Metals and Alloys v Workmen*, AIR 1967 SC 1175 said**, “*the first principle is that there is a minimum wage which, in any event, must be paid, irrespective of the extent of profits, the financial condition of the establishment or the availability of workmen on lower wages. This minimum wage is independent of the kind of industry and applies to all alike big or small. It sets the lowest limit below which wages cannot be allowed to sink in all humanity.*”
5. **Supreme Court in Standard Vacuum Refining Co (supra)** said, “*...minimum wage at all times and under all circumstances. An employer who cannot pay the minimum wage has no right to engage labour and no justification to run the industry.*”
6. **Supreme Court in *Workmen v Reptakoss Brett & Co. Ltd*, (1992) 1 SCC 290** set the standards by fixing norms for fixation of minimum wage. Court said the following:  
“The Tripartite Committee of the Indian Labour Conference held in New Delhi in 1957 declared the wage policy which was to be followed during the Second Five Year Plan. The Committee accepted the following five norms for the fixation of ‘minimum wage’: (i) In calculating the minimum wage, the standard working class family should be taken to consist of 3 consumption units for one earner; the earnings of women, children and adolescents should be disregarded.  
(ii) Minimum food requirement should be calculated on the basis of a net intake of calories, as recommended by Dr. Aykroyd for an average Indian adult of moderate activity.

- (iii) Clothing requirements should be estimated at per capita consumption of 18 yards per annum which would give for the average workers' family of four, a total of 72 yards.
- (iv) In respect of housing, the rent corresponding to the minimum area provided for under Government's Industrial Housing Scheme should be taken into consideration in fixing the minimum wage.
- (v) Fuel, lighting and other 'miscellaneous' items of expenditure should constitute 20% of the total minimum wage."

"This Court in Standard Vacuum Refining Company's case (*supra*) has referred to the above norms with approval. The concept of 'minimum wage' is no longer the same as it was in 1936. Even 1957 is way-behind. A worker's wage is no longer a contract between an employer and an employee. It has the force of collective bargaining under the labour laws. Each category of the wage structure has to be tested at the anvil of social justice which is the live-fibre of our society today.

"Keeping in view the socio-economic aspect of the wage structure, we are of the view that it is necessary to add the following additional component as a guide for fixing the minimum wage in the industry:-

- (vi) children education, medical requirement, minimum recreation including festivals/ ceremonies and provision for old age, marriages etc. should further constitute 25% of the total minimum wage.

The wage structure which approximately answers the above six components is nothing more than a minimum wage at subsistence level. The employees are entitled to the minimum wage at all times and under all circumstances. An employer who cannot pay the minimum wage has no right to engage labour and no justification to run the industry."

## **Record Price Rise**

According to the data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in November, 2017; the prices increased for the month of October as below:

- The wholesale price index went up by 3.59%;
- Food prices rose by 4.30%;
- Overall vegetable prices rose by 36.61%;
- Protein-based food items such as eggs, meat and fish became expensive by 5.76%;
- Paddy became dearer by 3.10%;
- Fuel and power prices accelerated by 10.52% - Petrol by 12.87%; LPG by 26.53%;
- Clothing and footwear went up 4.76%;
- Prices of manufactured products, which comprise nearly 64.23% of the index, recorded a 2.62% rise;
- Housing inflation stood at 6.7%.

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## **30 October**

### **Countrywide *Jan Ekta Mashal* March held**

In response to the call of Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (JEJAA), the biggest platform of class, mass and social organisations and movements; from its national convention in New Delhi on 18 September (The Working Class, October, 2017); people resorted to nationwide protest through Jan Ekta Mashal (Flame of Unity) March on 30 October against attack on the democratic, secular fabric of the country and on the people's rights. Hundreds of people gathered in various locations to take part in the protest. Following are some reports available at CITU centre.

**Delhi:** More than a 300 members of different class and mass organisations and of movements including CITU, AITUC, AICCTU, AIUTUC, UTUC, TUCC, SFI, DYFI, AIDWA brought out torchlight procession from Shahidi Park at 5 pm and converted into mass rally at ITO in defence of People's Unity, People's Rights and People's Resistance; expressing solidarity with the growing struggles in different sections of people against the anti-people policies of Modi government; taking pledge to isolate the communal forces; and unite against the neoliberal policies. Candles were lighted as 'Unity Flame'; slogans were raised in support of workers and farmers struggles and against demonetisation, GST and 'jobless' economy. Mass meeting was presided over by CITU state president Virendra Goud and addressed by national leaders A. R. Sindhu of CITU and Santosh Roy of AICCTU and others.

**Odisha:** JEJAA, Odisha chapter organized torchlight processions at the state capital Bhubaneswar and district towns including Cuttack, Rourkela, Jagatsingpur, Balasore, Puri and Angul and in industrial centres. At Bhubaneswar torchlight procession marched from Rajmahal Chowk joined by hundreds of members of different mass organizations, raising slogans against anti-people policies of the RSS-led Modi government and for 26 point people's charter of demands, as was adopted in the national convention of JJEJAA. The procession concluded in a rally at Ram Mandir Squire which was joined and addressed by AIKS general secretary Hannan Mollah and its joint secretary Vijoo Krishnan, Secretary of Odisha Krishak Sabha Suresh Panigrahi, president of Odisha Krishak Sabha Yambeswar Samantaray, Jyoti Mahapatra of Agragami Kisan Sabha; Alikishore Patnaik and Dusmanta Das of CITU, Ramakrushna Panda of AITUC, Mahendra Parida of AICCTU, Jaysen Mehar of AIUTUC; Tapasi Praharaj of AIDWA; Jatin Mohanty of DYFI; Sala Marandi of Adivasi Adhikar Rastriya Manch and representatives of many organisations

**Kerala:** As part of the all India programme of JEJAA, a State level meeting of all class and mass organisations and the movements was held on 12 October. Accordingly, the JEJAA convention's resolutions and demands were campaigned extensively at local level. On 30 October candle light processions were brought out as the 'Flame of Unity' and mass meetings were held at all district head quarters and other important centres throughout the State. The three slogans 'Peoples Unity,

People's Rights and People's Resistance' were highlighted in these meetings. The main attraction, however, was the 'Flame of Unity' which widely attracted the people and the media.

**Uttar Pradesh:** Despite municipal election and imposition of Sec.144 throughout the State, wide scale harvesting and other political organisational priorities; candle light processions, demonstrations and mass meetings were held in district headquarters of Bulandshahar, Itawa, Agra, Chandauli, Deoria, Varanasi, Eta, Kashganj, Bijnaur, Kushinagar, Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Gajipur, Hardoi, Bareilly, Ballia, Kanpur and Basti. 26 point demands and resolution, adopted in the national convention of JEJAA, were widely campaigned and memoranda on these were sent to the President, Prime Minister and Chief Minister.

**Haryana:** On 30 October at Gurgaon, various class, mass and social organisations and movements including CITU, AITUC, AIUTUC, AIDWA, Haryana Gyan Vigyan Samity and others held mass meeting at local Kamala Nehru Park, brought out candle light procession and from 6 PM staged demonstrations and rally at Mahavir Chowk addressed by the leaders of the attending mass organisations including Satbir Singh, Anil Panwar, Usha Saroha, Hardeep Punia and Ishwar Nastik. The meeting also expressed support and gave call to make Workers Mahapadav on 9-11 November and Kisan Rally on 20 November in New Delhi successful.

## **Crony Capitalism: Amnesty for Corporate Loan Defaulters**

Central government's decision to recapitalize the public sector banks by infusing a staggering amount of Rs.2.11 lakh crores comes at a time when the banks are burdened by huge non-performing assets (NPAs). Instead of pursuing the defaulter-corporates for payment of estimated as Rs.11.5 lakh crores NPAs inclusive of interest, the government has virtually pardoned the loan defaulters.

During 3 years rule, BJP government has written off corporate loans to the tune of Rs.2 lakh crores. This mega concession for the corporates is now being met through public funding of this recapitalization. This is tantamount to the Indian people bailing out the banks that are being looted by the corporates.

There cannot be any worse expression of crony capitalism than this. While loan waivers for the farmers committing suicides due to agrarian distress is refused, the corporates are being encouraged to run away with the loans that they have taken from the monies deposited in banks by crores of Indians.

The logic advanced by the Finance Minister that this recapitalization will allow the banks to give further loans to the corporates which will lead to higher investments which, in turn, will lead to an employment and economic growth; is flawed. Increase in investments *per se* cannot increase employment and growth rates. In a world of shrinking trade, with Indian exports registering a twenty year rock bottom and the significantly reduced purchasing power in the hands of the Indian people, thanks to demonetization and GST, has drastically shrinking domestic demand.

This government, following the *diktat* of international finance capital, pursuing the neo-liberal economic reforms favouring foreign and Indian corporates has embarked on such a course which will impose even greater burdens on the vast majority of our people. [From; CPI(M) Polit Bureau statement]

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

<b>State</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>Aug. 2017</b>	<b>Sep. 2017</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>Aug. 2017</b>	<b>Sep. 2017</b>
AP	GUNTUR	279	277	MHR	MUMBAI	294	293
	VIJAYWADA	278	277		NAGPUR	318	318
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	285	282		NASIK	294	295
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	262	267		PUNE	277	276
	GUWAHATI	249	250	ORI	SHOLAPUR	296	295
	LABAC SILCHAR	262	261		ANGUL TALCHER	300	300
	MARIANI JORHAT	245	248		ROURKELA	304	305
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	243	243	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	298	298
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	300	300	PUN	AMRITSAR	287	286
CHD	CHANDIGARH	284	284		JALANDHAR	287	286
CHS	BHILAI	312	318		LUDHIANA	277	276
DLI	DELHI	264	263	RJN	AJMER	265	263
GOA	GOA	297	297		BHILWARA	279	276
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	274	272	T N	JAIPUR	275	273
	BHAVNAGAR	270	272		CHENNAI	263	261
	RAJKOT	272	274		COIMBATORE	271	270
	SURAT	262	263		COONOOR	281	281
	VADODARA	262	263		MADURAI	282	281
HYR	FARIDABAD	263	260		SALEM	274	270
	YAMUNANAGAR	277	276		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	289	285
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	259	258	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	295	293
J&K	SRINAGAR	262	264		HYDERABAD	249	249
JRK	BOKARO	280	279		WARRANGAL	289	288
	GIRIDIH	306	303	TRP	TRIPURA	257	264
	JAMSHEDPUR	335	332	UP	AGRA	312	310
	JHARIA	308	309		GAZIABAD	280	279
	KODARMA	326	326		KANPUR	293	291
	RANCHI HATIA	325	326		LUCKNOW	281	277
KNT	BELGAUM	292	294	WB	VARANASI	286	282
	BENGLURU	291	288		ASANSOL	306	307
	HUBLI DHARWAR	305	304		DARJEELING	256	256
	MERCARA	303	304		DURGAPUR	308	312
	MYSORE	299	297		HALDIA	315	312
KRL	ERNAKULAM	292	295		HOWRAH	272	270
	MUNDAKKAYAM	299	303		JALPAIGURI	279	279
	QUILON	327	323		KOLKATA	270	270
MP	BHOPAL	282	280		RANIGANJ	257	254
	CHHINDWARA	293	292		SILIGURI	264	269
	INDORE	261	259		ALL INDIA INDEX	285	285
	JABALPUR	281	282				

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# Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan

CITU Participation in 30 October *Jan Ekta Mashal* March

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Kannur, Kerala



Ernakulam, Kerala



Delhi



Gurgaon, Haryana



Rourkela, Odisha



Bhubaneswar, Odisha



Ballia, Uttar Pradesh



Aurangabad, Maharashtra

# Kisan Sangsad

New Delhi; 20-21 November, 2017

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Huge Procession



Kisan Sangsad at Parliament Street



Leaders on Unity Platform



Families of Kisans, who committed suicide