



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

Electricity Workers Protest at Srinagar

(Report Page 21)



JNU Students Protest before Parliament

(Report Page 25)



Condolence

Homage to Comrade Gurudas Dasgupta



CITU is deeply grieved on the passing away of Comrade Gurudas Dasgupta, the veteran trade union leader of the country and eminent parliamentarian, on 31 October, after prolonged illness, at the age of 83.

Comrade Dasgupta breathed his last on 31 October, the very day a century before when India's first central trade union AITUC was formed heralding the unity and struggle of the working class movement and workers participation in the national freedom movement, the legacy of which both AITUC and CITU carry. He led the AITUC as its general secretary for more than a decade.

Comrade Gurudas Dasgupta was national level student leader and steered the AISF for long. His association with the working class movement was for more than five decades playing important role in broadening the united platform of trade unions in their struggle against neoliberal economic policy. He was member of both Houses of the Parliament for 25 years and was an outstanding parliamentarian championing the cause of the working class and all other marginalized sections of the people.

CITU salutes the departed leader for his great contribution for the cause of toiling people, their rights and livelihood; in defending the democracy and the unity and integrity of the country and its people. Demise of Comrade Gurudas Dasgupta is a big loss to the working class and democratic movement of the country. CITU pays respectful homage to the departed leader and conveys its heartfelt condolence to his comrades in AITUC and bereaved family.

Comrade S. Kumar



Comrade S. Kumar, veteran leader and organiser of working class movement in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh passed away on 9 November 2019 at the age of 80 after he met with an accident causing head injury.

Comrade Kumar joined Left movement in West Bengal at young age. During semi-fascist terror days in 1970s, he took shelter in Madhya Pradesh and devoted himself in organising workers in trade unions and leading their struggles. He played crucial role in organising the coal workers in undivided Madhya Pradesh. Comrade Kumar was the founder office bearer of All India Coal Workers Federation; founder secretary of CITU in undivided Madhya Pradesh; and the first state secretary of CPI(M) in the newly formed Chhattisgarh state. He was a bachelor, led a simple life and frequented the workers and toiling sections.

In his death the working class movement, CITU in particular, lost a great organiser and leader. CITU pays homage to the departed leader and conveys heartfelt condolences to the comrades and his family members.

WORKING CLASS

DECEMBER 2019

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor

K. Hemalata

Working Editor

J.S. Majumdar

Members

Tapan Sen

A. K. Padmanabhan

Amitava Guha

<u>Inside</u>	<u>Page</u>
Industries & Sector	
Oil - Modi govt Privatisation	
Move & Workers Struggle	
- Swadesh Devroye	5
Historic Strike of Telangana	
Road Transport Worker	
- K K Divakaran	10
9th Conference of AIFAWH	17
States	19
J & K Electricity Workers	20
A Victory in the battle	
for Minimum Wage	23
JNU students movement	
and the peoples support	25

Rising Students Struggles

Students' struggles are bursting out in different parts of the country recently. For more than a month now, JNU students are on strike and on the streets against an authoritarian vice chancellor and hostile administration who have waged an undeclared war against their own students. The latest issues are huge increase in fees, restrictions on students' freedom of expression, curbing their free movement in the campus, giving up democratic route of consultation, discussion and dialogue to find solution and resolve issues. It is being ruled by administrative diktats. Added to these, are action of Delhi police, directly under Central government, on the peaceful students protest before the Parliament.

Several deeper issues are connected with these developments related to students unrest including that of JNU. They are fighting against erosion of Constitutional values the reasons of which are embedded in the Modi government's New Education policy. Education is being treated as a commodity for commercialisation and privatisation. The governments are withdrawing from institutional responsibilities from primary to higher education as the developments in several BJP ruled states will establish.

There is also issue of deprivation of socially marginalized sections - the STs, SCs and OBCs and economically weaker sections of students. Added to these is saffronisation of education and bringing communal divisions. In West Bengal, the insensitive government is only counting the number of absentee Para-Teachers, for disciplinary actions, during their fortnight-long sit-in / hunger strike for wage and justice. Similar is the situation of ad hoc teachers, from primary to higher education, in different states working against large number of vacant posts of permanent teachers.

The trade union movement cannot remain indifferent to these developments. CITU has already expressed support and solidarity with struggling students and teachers' movement.

The broader democratic issues are being thrown before the trade union movement. Students struggle is part of

it. These have to be brought within the consciousness of the working class going beyond their day to demands weaving a democratic front for the future of India. (24/11/2019)

Onto 8 January 2020 General Strike

AIKS Decides Rural Strike; Calls for General Bandh

The Central Kisan Committee (CKC) of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), which met in New Delhi, resolved to actively support the All India Workers General Strike on 8 January 2020, called by the central trade unions (CTUs).

In a statement, AIKS said that CTUs have raised issues of price rise; unemployment; minimum wages; minimum support price; privatisation of PSEs; essential services including health and education; the privatisation of railways; danger of signing RCEP; atrocities against minorities, women, children, Dalits and Adivasis; etc. The general strike truly addresses the burning issues of the people of India.

The agrarian crisis is intensifying with farmers' suicides continuing unabated; incomes are falling as costs of cultivation are rising and prices are not remunerative; MGNREGA is being dismantled; crop insurance scheme is only helping corporate companies raking profits; even the pittance under PM-KISAN is not available for the vast majority; indebtedness and hunger are growing. There is overwhelming discontent and anger against the BJP government policies among all sections of the toiling people.

The CKC decided to highlight issues of the peasantry and work to make the first major countrywide strike, after the last general election, into a massive protest of the people in the form of a total shutdown / Bandh. Rural Hartal will also be observed on 8 January, 2020.

AIKS will take initiative along with the CITU and AIAWU to enlist support of all sections, different mass and class organisations as well as civil society groups to make the general strike a massive protest. *Road Roko and Rail Roko* will be organised in association with all other Left, democratic and progressive minded organisations.

Joint Meeting of Fraternal Class & Mass organisations

All India leadership of CITU, AIKS, AIAWU, AIDWA, DYFI and SFI met at BTR Bhavan in New Delhi on 28 October and unanimously decided programmes in support of All India Workers General Strike on 8 January 2020.

It was unanimously agreed that, keeping in view the brewing discontent and anger among all sections of the toiling people against this BJP government, this first major countrywide strike must be converted into a massive protest of the people in the form of a Bandh.

In a joint statement on 1 November they said that people's livelihood issues; atrocities against socially marginalised section as well as issues of serious national concern like attacks on Constitutional and democratic rights have been raised by the joint trade union platform. It was decided that the Kisans will organise *Rural Strike* and Students Strike by students; massive *Road Roko* and *Rasta Roko* on 8 January involving all Left, democratic and progressive organisations and forces.

The meeting decided to issue joint and separate circulars by each organisation; to hold state level followed by district level joint meetings; state, district and block level joint conventions; joint campaign and maximum mobilisation of the people; hold town / village level public meetings; organise campaign, rallies and other demonstrative programmes and jointly monitor the progress made.

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Oil & Petroleum

Modi Govt's Privatisation Move & Workers Struggle

[‘Disinvestment kiks in: State sale in major PSUs announced’ - screamed the headlines of corporate media while reporting on Union Finance Minister’s press briefing on 20 November, 2019 after the meeting of CCEA (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs). Finance minister said that the government has decided to privatise BPCL, Concor and Shipping Corporation through strategic sale; offload entire stake in power companies – THDC and NEEPCO - and transfer management control of PSU power major NTPC. The current Union budget target is to mop up ₹1.05 lakh crore through disinvestment of PSUs to meet budget deficit in the Modi government’s failed economy. However, facing people’s agitation in Assam, the government took one step back when CCEA took decision to exclude the BPCL subsidiary Numaligarh Refinery from privatisation.

Following write up by CITU national secretary S. Dev Roye explains the core issues at stake due to government’s decision and about the opposition and resistance by the workers in oil sector]

Oil MNCs were driven out; Modi government welcoming them in

Swadesh Dev Roye

The recent economic ‘stimulus package’ of Modi Government mainly to benefit the big business houses has been costing the country’s exchequer by huge .1.45 lakh crore. More such stimuli are in the offing. To make good this revenue loss, Modi government is selling PSUs with their huge physical and financial assets turning a blind eye to the fact that there would be huge revenue losses due to such privatization on account of losses in taxes, duties and dividends being paid by these PSUs. Fund mobilisation by selling economically sound PSUs will end only in widening revenue deficit and ultimately shifting the burden on the common people.

To fast-track this process of privatization, the Union cabinet has chosen shortcut route bypassing all concerned administrative ministries. The ‘trio’ - PMO, NITI Ayog and DIPAM – has been delegated power to push forward ‘*Project Privatisation.*’

Suicidal push to privatise BPCL and HPCL

Union cabinet has already approved sale of government’s entire stake of 53.29% in BPCL; 63.75% in Shipping Corporation; 30% in Concor, 75% in THDC and of 100% in NEEPCO. Later, HPCL has been added in the first list.

While privatising excellently run Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), Modi government has given up earlier day's route of vilification campaign against PSUs' performance first to prepare ground for privatisation. This shows government's least concern of public opinion and total grip of few crony domestic corporates and their foreign collaborators on it.

Struggle against oil MNCs and formation of BPCL and HPCL

Public sector BPCL and HPCL are the two historical achievement of the people's protracted struggle led the trade unions in the 1950s demanding nationalization of oil MNCs. It had political and economic perspective - to drive out the extremely exploitative oil MNCs and create space for industrialization in independent India led by public sector as was envisaged in the 1956 Industrial Policy Resolution of the Parliament. The most shining people's action against oil MNCs was a huge 50,000 strong militant demonstration in front Caltex office in Kolkata in October, 1967. These were the contributing factors behind the nationalization oil MNCs and formation of BPCL and HPCL.

By foreign oil companies nationalisation Acts ESSO was nationalised in 1974, Burma Shell in 1976 and Caltex in 1977. On 24 January 1976, the Burmah Shell was taken over and Bharat Refineries Limited was formed. On 1 August 1977, it was renamed as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL). It was also the first refinery to process newly found indigenous crude oil produced by ONGC at the Bombay High off-shore deep-sea oil field which was discovered with the help of USSR. Standard Vacuum Refining Company was changed as ESSO Standard Refining Company. In 1974, Lube India and ESSO were amalgamated and present HPCL came into being after nationalisation.

BPCL and HPCL are the two modern historical monuments in India. Modi government is demolishing these historical monuments of the country – a shameful, shocking and seditious act by the corporate-captive government of the day.

BPCL's assets

With four refineries at Mumbai, Kochi, Numaligarh (Assam) and Bina in Madhya Pradesh BPCL has total installed crude oil refining capacity of 38.3 MMT per annum. It has vast storage locations and distribution installations near all of their refineries. BPCL has 77 major oil installations and depots for storage and distribution of petroleum products; 55 LPG bottling plants; 2241 Km multi-product pipeline; 56 aviation fuelling stations in airports; 4 lubricant plants and godowns; and facilities for unloading and loading of crude and finished products in major ports. It has 11 subsidiary companies within India and abroad; 22 joint-venture companies and also share holdings in different companies. In addition, there are huge land holdings of BPCL in prime locations of metropolitan and other cities across India. The BPCL is having more than 24% market share of petroleum products in India.

In marketing, BPCL has 15,078 retail outlets and 6,004 LPG distributorship agencies apart from aviation fuel sales facility in airports and lubricants sales shops and other bulk sales across the country. It has long standing and ever strengthening *Brand Value*. On the basis of survey, 'expert opinion' of ETEnergyworld states, "*it (BPCL) has an opportunity to become the second-largest fuel retailer in the fastest growing oil market in the world.*"

At present BPCL is executing projects all over the country costing more than .48,182 crores including the 6.00 MMTA expansion projects of Numaligar refinery. BPCL has been awarded the status of a 'Maharatna' company in 2017.

The BPCL has been steadily making profit since its inception throughout last 5 decades and making big contribution to national exchequer every year by way of dividend, direct and indirect taxes, sales tax etc. Total turnover increased from .247 in 2014-15 to .339 lakh crore in 2018-19 with cumulative reserves of .50,576 crore and surplus to the tune of .34,400 crores paying 17,246 crore as dividend during the period. In the last financial year itself the taxes paid to the national exchequer was around .96,000 crores. BPCL's real assets value is estimated more than 2 lakh crore.

HPCL assets

HPCL has 18 MTTA refining capacity and 15,127 retail outlets. The net sales increased by around 22% at .3 lakh crore in the last financial year with profit of .7,218 crore. ONGC was compelled to buy the total 51.11% government equity of HPCL in 2017-18 at abnormally high price amounting to .36,915 crore. The government resorted to such arm-twisting measure in order to meet its disinvestment target. ONGC took loan of close to .25,000 crore to buy the government's equity in HPCL. The deal left debt-free ONGC to a loan-laden PSU.

Human resource in these oil PSUs

The BPCL has huge human resource assets – number of permanent employees is nearly 12,000 and regularly working contractual employees around 20,000. In HPCL, the number of permanent employees is around 11,000 and of regularly working contractual workers of more than 31,000. Both are providing reserved employment to thousands of ST, SC and backward classes. This will end when privatised.

PSUs job creation

PSUs contribution in providing employment is far ahead of private sector. According to Labour & Employment Report for 2011-12, PSUs provide 17.6 million employments against 11.9 million by private sector. Moreover, the quality of employment in PSUs and private sector in respect of job security and compensation package and work place democratic environment, the situation in PSUs is far better than the private sector.

MNCs infiltrations in oil business / advantage RIL- Aramco combine

It is of serious concern that foreign private oil and gas giants have already infiltrated into the Indian oil and petroleum business with support of Modi government. Recently, French giant Total SA announced acquisition of 37.4% stake in Adani Gas, which retails compressed natural gas to automobiles and piped cooking gas to households, besides developing import terminals and a national chain of petrol stations.

At the instance of the government, ONGC has signed a MoU with US petroleum giant Exxon-Mobil on 14 October, 2018 for exploration and production of crude oil. BP Plc has acquired 30% stake in Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) operated oil and gas blocks. They also entered into a joint venture to set up 5,500 fuel stations across the country. Reliance has also announced Saudi Aramco's plan to pick up its stakes in refineries and other petrochemical assets in Gujarat for over .1 lakh crore. Early this year, Canada-based Brookfield Asset Management's India Infrastructure Trust acquired Reliance's loss-making entity East West Pipeline for Rs 13,000 crore.

Further, the Saudi oil giant Aramco has been granted storing of about 4.6 million barrels of crude oil into the country's 'Strategic Petroleum Reserve' in Padur in Karnataka. This step is bound to give strategic advantage to RIL-Aramco combine and put IOC in disadvantageous situation.

Consequences

- Handing over these national assets to private oil giants, both domestic and foreign, would be a clear act of betrayal to the country and its people. The RIL's present refining capacity is 62 MMTA. If BPCL and HPCL refineries are captured by RIL, its total refining capacity will jump to around 120 MMTA. Obviously RIL will emerge as the decisive and dominant oil refining company. Similarly, by capturing huge network of BPCL's and HPCL's 30,500 retail outlets, RIL will have the decisive control of the oil marketing also.
- Today, in public interest, 75% of India's fuel marketing is owned by three PSUs - IOCL, BPCL and HPCL. Based on this strength, even in the de-regulated fuel pricing regime, government has scope to exercise some

control on fuel pricing. But, once BPCL and HPCL are fully privatized surrendering the controlling power to RIL, one can easily imagine as to how the petroleum products prices will be skyrocketing.

- Against the vital strategic importance of India in respect of Energy Security and Energy Economy both will be fully under the grip of private oil giants from within the country and abroad.
- PSUs have been spending lakh of crore of rupees extending various welfare services to the people and the society in the matter of health services, drinking water, sanitation, education, roads, electricity and other infrastructure under the 'Corporate Social Responsibility'. The funding for the 'Swachh Bharat' scheme of the government has been fully financed by PSUs. On the contrary, private sector is hostile to the concept of CSR itself let alone doing anything worth mentioning.
- There will be serious consequences on the employees leading to huge job losses. The reasons, inter-alia, are (a) the authoritarian powers being extended to the employers to 'Hire and Fire' employees by the government through the on-going pro-employer changes in labour laws under the guise of Code on Wage, Code of Social Security, Code on Health & Safety and Code on Industrial Relations; (b) Level of pay, perks and facilities, achieved by the PSU employees through long drawn struggles, will not be accepted by the oil MNCs; (c) Private sector oil companies employ only fixed term contractual workers and pay poor wages, in other words there is no system of appointing permanent workers; these private companies manpower policy is 'lower workforce and higher workload.'

Oil sector workers struggles against privatisation

First attempt of privatisation of BPCL and HPCL was made by NDA's Vajpayee government in 2002. RIL, BP of UK, Kuwait Petroleum, Petronas of Malaysia, the Shell-Saudi Aramco combine and Essar Oil had already submitted '*expression of interest*' for outright buying of both the oil companies. Vajpayee government had also decided to hive-off total marketing set-up of IOCL to private sector. However, the government's move was defeated by strike of BPCL and HPCL workers followed by historical strike by entire oil PSU workers; effective intervention by the opposition parties in the Parliament and the historical judgment of the Supreme Court.

In conspiratorial manner, the present NDA government in 2016 passed in the Parliament Act repealing the so called "*187 obsolete and redundant laws lying unnecessarily on the Statue-Book*" including the 1976 Act of nationalisation of Burmah Shell and thus doing away with Parliamentary approval of BPCL's sale.

Oil workers national conventions and the strike

On 26 October 2019, a united national convention of oil PSU workers was held in Mumbai which participated by trade unions representatives from ONGC, IOC, BPCL, HPCL and GAIL coming from different parts of the country. National leaders of CITU, AITUC, INTUC and Bharatiya Kamgar Sena addressed the convention. The convention adopted sustained programme of campaign, agitation and action culminating into a day's nationwide strike by BPCL and HPCL workers on 28 November 2019.

On 9 November, northern regional convention was held in New Delhi focusing on preparation of the strike and another national convention on 20 November 2019 with wider participation.

In the meantime, local level struggles of BPCL and HPCL workers, mainly at Mumbai, Kochi, Visakhapatnam and Numaligarh (Assam), are continuing with massive mobilization and memorandum submission in delegation to the governments and legislators. Notably, the Chief Minister of Kerala has already written letter to the Prime Minister on 17 October 2019 opposing privatisation of BPCL.

It may be noted that Numaligarh Refinery was set up in public sector on the basis of the 'Assam Accord'. Obviously, there is perceptible protest and anger amongst different sections of the people of Assam against the privatization move of BPCL. Student organisations and local people have been staging protest demonstrations separately at the refinery gate and before the office of the DM of the district. The Numaligarh Employees Union has been conducting various agitations.

The 20 November convention and 28 November 2019 nationwide strike by BPCL and HPCL workers will give big push to the ongoing opposition to the decision of corporate-captive Modi government to hand over the strategically important oil PSUs to domestic and foreign corporates.

Oil Workers National Convention in Mumbai

A national convention of oil and petroleum workers, held in Mumbai on 26 October 2019, was attended by 350 delegates of trade unions of different affiliations and independent unions in ONGC, IOC, OIL, BPCL and HPCL. National leaders of CITU, AITUC, INTUC and Kamgar Sena addressed the convention in support of the strike against privatization of BPCL and HPCL.

CITU's secretary Swadesh Dev Roye presented the convention declaration against BPCL and HPCL privatisation move; on MNCs penetration and the programme of actions. All speakers spoke in support of the declaration expressing strong opposition and resentment against privatisation move of oil PSUs by the Union government. Convention appealed to the other oil and petroleum PSU workers to extend solidarity actions. The convention appealed to the joint platform of 10 central trade unions and independent national federations to extend support.

The convention adopted countrywide programme of action by BPCL and HPCL workers including pre-strike joint campaign and mobilisation; 11-17 November All India Protest Week; bigger and wider national convention in New Delhi on 20 November; day-long dharna before all establishments on 26 November and 24 hours strike from 6 to 6 hours on 28-29 November.

National Convention in New Delhi

The national convention of oil and petroleum workers, held in New Delhi on 20 November, was attended by about 300 delegates of petroleum workers, engaged in production, refining, pipelines and marketing of oil PSU majors - ONGC, OIL, GAIL, IOCL, BPCL, HPCL and MRPL, coming from Assam, West Bengal, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and NCT Delhi. The general secretaries of three national federations in oil PSUs - AIPWF, NFPW and PGWFI - IM Uniyal, NA Khanvilkar and Nogen Chutia presided and addressed the convention.

The convention was inaugurated by INTUC national president G. Sanjeeva Reddy and was addressed by AITUC general secretary Amarjeet Kaur. The MPs, who addressed the convention, include E. Kareem, K. K. Ragesh, K. Somaprasad and A.M. Ariff of CPI(M); Binoy Viswam of CPI; Hibi Eden of Congress; and Anil Desai and Gajanan Kirtikar of Shiva Sena.

The declaration of the convention was presented by CITU national secretary Swadesh Dev Roye, 15 delegates participated in the discussion and it was adopted unanimously.

The convention fully endorsed the declaration of 26 October convention in Mumbai with the adopted programme of action including 24 hours strike in BPCL and HPCL on 28-29 November. 21 unions in BPCL, HPCL and MRPL already served strike notice.

The convention decided that other oil sector workers in ONGC, OIL, GAIL, IOCL, BALMER LAWRIE, PAWAN HANS will wear black badge, stage demonstration and hold gate meeting on 28 November in solidarity with striking BPCL, HPCL and MRPL workers.

The convention also supported and decided to fully participate in the nationwide workers general strike on 8 January 2020, as decided in the 30 September joint national mass convention of central trade unions and federations; serve strike notice on 21 December, organise mass campaign among oil and petroleum workers and demonstrative programmes during 16 – 20 December; hold next national convention in Kolkata on 22 December; and hold review meeting after 8 January strike.

CTUs denounced privatisation move of CPSUs; Called for workers united protest & resistance

10 central trade unions (CTUs) – INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, UTUC and LPF – in a statement on 21 November strongly protested against disastrous decisions of Modi government to privatise excellently run and financially strong CPSUs through strategic sale of BPCL, Concor and Shipping corporation; directing NTPC to buy government's share in THDC and NEERCO; and divesting government's share in IOC, NTPC, Bharat Electronics, BEML, Engineers India, GAIL and NALCO; and, thereby, removing CPSUs from the economic map of India. The CTUs demanded reversal of the government's decision.

The CTUs extended full support to BPCL workers strike on 28 November and called upon all workers, irrespective of their affiliations, to organise solidarity actions in support of the striking BPCL workers; and activation of the united platform of CPSU unions / federations to prepare for long drawn struggle to reverse the government's privatisation policy.

Road Transport

Historic Strike of Telangana Road Transport Workers

K. K. Divakaran

In a sensational move, the Telangana government announced dismissal from service of 48,000-odd employees and workers out of total 49,190 workers of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) after they launched an indefinite strike from 5 October 2019 at the call of all the unions demanding solution to their long-pending demands. Even the High Court rejected to declare the strike as illegal. As on 15 November the strike crossed 42 days without any change due to the adamant attitude of state government. By all counts it is a historical and magnificent strike. In support of the strike solidarity actions were organised by road transport workers throughout the country.

Why the strike?

The striking unions are demanding merger of TSRTC with the state government as was done in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh, where they are being treated as government employees. The workers are not paid the retirement benefits even after one year. The statutory benefit of the provident fund amounts of the workers was utilised by the RTC. The workers are running a cooperative society. The monthly contributions of the workers, deducted by the management from the salaries of the workers, are not remitted by the Corporation to the Society.

The amounts of concessions to different sections of the passengers which were announced by the state government for its political mileage are not reimbursed. The wage revision of the workers is due since

2017 April. No new recruitment is taking place even though nearly 10,000 workers retired and died during the last 5 years. Even the regular managing director was not appointed by the government. Employees are demanding enhanced retirement age of 60 years and other benefits and budgetary provision for the RTC.

RTC's losses are mainly because of government's failure to reimburse the corporation's revenue losses due to imposition of various governmental subsidies on the RTC; increasing diesel prices through central and state government's increasing taxes; imposition of GST, shared by the central and state government, etc. The government is yet to clear dues of Rs.2,400 to TSRTC and failed to keep the promise of reducing tax on diesel to reduce the financial burden of the Corporation.

In TSRTC about 95% services are operating in nationalised routes. Chief minister said that private bus operators would be brought into the TSRTC to work as a public-private partnership and half of the RTC fleet would be private buses. The real intention is to privatise the bus routes in the wake of new M.V. Act. The Union government has filed a statement in High Court that there is no need of sanction from central government to bifurcate APSRTC on a petition filed by unions seeking financial assistance under RTC Act 1950.

Is the strike illegal or all of a sudden? No. The unions are patiently appealing the authorities of the corporation and the government continuously for the redressal of the problems. They have resorted to many peaceful agitations other than strike action. One union has obtained the opinion of the workers through ballot. More than 98% of the workers voted in favour of strike and pressurised the other unions to give a call for strike. Left with no other alternative, three unions formed a Joint Action Committee and served strike notice as per the provisions of the law. Negotiations with the officials of the corporation and the conciliation process by the labour department had failed. At last, after 30 days of serving the strike notice, the unions called for strike from 5 October.

The Strike

48,000 plus workers are on strike at the call of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of road transport workers in Telangana. The unions exempted the medical staff from the strike as emergency medical care is utmost important. The strike bypassed all the earlier strikes of transport workers anywhere in India.

The JAC, since many months, had been raising the issues with the state government. As the government failed to respond, the JAC gave the strike notice on 6 September and was compelled to go on strike because of the negligent attitude of the state government.

The government is blaming the Corporation as loss making and the workloads on the workers are increased heavily. All these accumulated problems and the adamant attitude of the government and the corporation forced the workers in to strike action. Since the government has not taken any effective step the Court interfered and directed that permits will not be issued till 11 November and settle the strike before it.

The government blamed the workers for TSRTC losses and has gone all out to suppress the workers' legitimate demands, democratic and trade union rights and adopted repressive and authoritarian measures to break the strike including arrests of the joint convener of JAC, general secretary of Telangana Staff & Workers Federation (CITU) and CITU state office bearer V. S. Rao and other two joint conveners of JAC.

Statewide support

All the opposition political parties and the people at large have been extending all out support to the striking workers. The central trade unions had given call for general strike in the state on 19 October.

CITU and AIRTWF strongly condemned authoritarian attitude of the chief minister and repressive measures adopted by the government and demanded to revoke the decision of mass dismissals of the workers and hold discussion with the striking unions for settling the legitimate demands.

On 12 October, an all-party meeting with JAC, attended by CPI(M), CPI, Congress, BJP, Telangana Jana Samithi and TDP leaders condemned TRS government's actions against RTC workers and decided several agitational programmes including mass lunch on roads by cooking food there on 13 October; sit-in

protest and public meetings in front of the bus depots on 14 October; Rasta Roko and forming human chains on 15 October and Telangana Bandh on 19 October. Besides political parties, state government employees, trade unions, sections of advocates and student unions have extended their support to strike and the Bandh.

Telangana Bandh

The dawn-to-dusk state Bandh, called by unions of TSRTC employees on Saturday has paralysed life in the state capital. In Telangana, districts such as Warangal, Karimnagar and Medak normal life was severely affected due to the shutdown. Bandh received wide support from various sections of the people including students, employees and others. The 12-hour Bandh began at 5 am amid heightened security at most bus depots.

About 50,000 Ola and Uber cab drivers joined the strike with their own set of demands that include a better share in fares and establishment of a cab drivers' welfare board.

In view of the TSRTC strike and state Bandh, the government declared closure of schools and colleges till Monday, 21 October. The police also took about 40 union leaders and supporters into preventive custody in the early morning. Several of the political leaders and activists were arrested while staging dharna and picketing across the state. All India Road Transport Workers' Federation strongly condemned the illegal arrests of Telangana RTC Union leaders, activists and workers to disturb the peaceful mobilisation to Hyderabad on 9 November. Police arrested leaders, students and other activists. But it was successfully organised.

Countrywide solidarity actions

K. K. Divakaran along with another office bearer of AIRTWF, A.P. Anabazhagan rushed to Hyderabad to stand by the side of the striking workers. They visited the families of the RTC workers who committed suicide. AIRTWF collected solidarity fund to support the workers.

CITU national vice president A. K. Padmanabhan personally went to Hyderabad on 18 October, met the striking unions' leaders, conveyed CITU's support and addressed press conference with JAC leaders. CPI(M) Central Committee has extended full support to TSRTC strike, condemned TRS government's repressive actions and extended support to state-wide Bandh in support of the strike.

In all the 14 districts of Kerala, at different centres, solidarity actions by road transport workers, like massive demonstrations and rallies, have taken place supporting the Telangana transport workers strike. Programmes took place at 78 locations and more than 8000 workers participated. Kerala state road transport employees association, bus federation, goods lorry workers, light motor vehicle workers, driving school workers etc. have conducted their own programmes. In West Bengal a big transport workers rally was organised. In Andhra Pradesh road transport workers mass rally was organised. Several CITU state committees including in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Punjab, Haryana, Assam and others organised programmes for solidarity with TSRTC by holding rallies, dharna, demonstrations, public meeting etc.

High Court's Intervention

On 16 October, the High Court has asked the state government and union leaders to hold talks and submit a report based on it on 28 October. The government's lawyer pleaded that negotiation was not possible, to which the court responded that since 50% of the 45 demands do not have a financial implication, the government cannot refuse to listen to them and negotiate. The state government was also directed to pay salaries for September to all the 49,190 employees by October 21.

Reiterating that it had no power to direct the state government to hold negotiations with the striking TSRTC employees, the Telangana High Court on 12 November mooted a proposal to constitute a high-powered committee comprising three former Supreme Court judges to resolve the crisis. A division bench comprising chief Justice put forward the proposal, seeking response of the state government. The government replied negatively.

Workers are dying

At the provocation and unruly attitude of the government, 5 workers committed suicide; 11 workers died due to heart attack. 5 family members of the workers died. Total number of death till date is 21.

TRS government's repressive action is a threat to TSRTC workers and it is the responsibility of the working class and common people to defeat it.

(K. K. Divakaran is CITU national secretary and general secretary of AIRTWF)

Telangana High Court Orders

8 November: **Privatisation stayed**

In a major setback to the TRS government, which is at undeclared war with the employees of its own road transport corporation; the Telangana High Court on Friday stayed the state cabinet decision to privatise 5,100 bus routes.

The cabinet decided to privatise 5,100 bus routes and had also threatened that the government would privatise all the routes if workers did not attend duties by 5 November.

Referring to central M. V. Amendment Act, which came in force on 1 September, the states have the power to privatise the public transport, the chief minister KCR said.

All striking TSRTC unions have welcomed the court's decision and said that this was the first victory of workers.

11 November: **Court refused to declare the strike as illegal**

Next Monday, the Division Bench of the Telangana High Court with Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chouhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy, hearing a bunch of PILs on different aspects of TSRTC workers strike, said, "We cannot declare the ongoing strike by TSRTC employees as illegal." "We cannot overstep our jurisdiction. Explain the provisions of law which enable the HC to declare the strike as illegal." "Even if public interest is involved, the HC has to act within the framework of law", the Bench said. The Court held that only the Supreme Court under Article 142 of the Constitution has powers to pass order on any matter pending before it. The HC does not have similar power.

It may be recalled that the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had called the strike, which began on 5 October, as illegal and that the 48,000 RTC employees had sacked themselves by not attending duties after a deadline set by the state government next day.

12 November: **To form 3-member committee of retired SC judges**

Next Tuesday, on the 39th day of the indefinite strike of the 48,000 plus TSRTC workers in the entire state of Telangana since 5 October, the Telangana High Court at Hyderabad issued a significant order proposing setting up a 3 members committee of retired Supreme Court judges "to sort out the issue of the strike" and the transport crisis being faced by the people of the entire state by discussion with the JAC of striking unions, the TSRTC management and the government.

While JAC of all striking unions readily agreed with the court's directive, the advocate general of Telangana government sought time for consultation with the government before submitting reply by next day evening.

13 November: **Pay Rs.200 crore to employees' cooperative society**

Next Wednesday, the Telangana High Court passed another order to the state-owned TSRTC to deposit Rs.200 crore to the account of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation Employees Thrift Credit Cooperative Society within six weeks.

The court passed the order on hearing the petition of the said Society stating that the Society collects fees from its 50,000 members and gives loan to its members on the occasion of their needs. The RTC deducts these amounts from the salaries of the employees and then transfers these amounts to the Society's account. However, the RTC management stopped transferring the deducted amounts for past several years and utilised these amounts for other purposes. Society now claimed payment of entire unpaid amounts with interests amounting to over Rs.530 crore now.

Railways

More Protests against Railways Privatisation Move

Youths blocked rail tracks in Bihar

On 25 October, protesting against Modi government's privatisation move of trains, stations and production units of Indian Railways; hundreds of youths, mostly students, shouting slogans and carrying placards and banners, barged into the offices and blocked the railway tracks, halting movement of the trains, for over 4 hours at Sasaram railway station in Bihar on the Grand Cord route connecting national capital with Eastern India.

They raised slogans — '*railway ka nijikaran band karo*' (stop privatisation of railways), '*railway janta ki sampatti hai*' (railway is people's property), '*railway ko bechna bandh karo*' (stop selling railway) etc. They also announced that, in case the government goes ahead with privatisation move of Indian Railways, they would intensify the movement in all railway stations across the State.

The youths did not end the protest despite some assurances by the district magistrate and SP to forward their memorandum to the Central government. Police resorted to lathi charge injuring several youths. Heavy armed forces were deployed converting Sasaram railway station as a fortress.

Indian Railway is the biggest public transporter having 12,617 trains, carrying 2.3 crore of passengers daily (vast majority are economically marginalized sections), running on 1.15 lakh kms railway tracks connecting 7,172 railway stations in the entire country. It is a symbol of unity of India.

Indian Railways is also the biggest government job giver. However, there are 4.5 lakh vacant posts. The protesting youths are afraid that privatisation of railways will end their hope of getting government's jobs. Railway jobs are most sought after government jobs among the youth of Bihar and majority applicants for railways recruitment examinations are from Bihar. (*From NewsClick*)

Against privatisation trains halted

First 'private' train Tejas Express from Lucknow to New Delhi, being run by government-owned corporation of Indian Railways IRCTC, was inaugurated by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on 4 October at Lucknow.

However, it was halted at Ghaziabad railway station by railway employees protesting against privatisation.

Same day large number of railway employees staged demonstration before the divisional office of North Central Railway terming the launch of Tejas Express as a "Black Day".

On 23 October, railway employees halted Shatabdi Express at Tundla railway station protesting against IRCTC-run Tejas Express.

Under direction of NITI Aayog, Indian Railways has established a committee to work out details for handing over 50 railway stations and 150 trains to private companies. (From: NewsClick)

Protest by Differently-abled People in Delhi

Over 300 differently-abled people, who applied for Railway's Group D jobs, staged rally and dharna at Mandi House in New Delhi on 24 October protesting against privatisation move of Indian Railways. They demanded assurance from railway officials, reported PTI.

100 Days Action Plan of privatisation of Indian Railways

On the basis of Devroy committee report, railway ministry has decided 100 Days Action Plan as follows:

Fare Hikes: Beginning with 'Give it Up' campaign on the 47% passenger subsidy which will be made compulsory later as in case of LPG subsidy. Debroy report noted that unless fares were increased, private players won't come.

Private Trains: 2 trains on 'Important Routes' will be handed over to private players through IRCTC with total control including ticketing and on board services. Revenue earning routes will be taken over by private operators; time tables will be decided by them; train fares will become 'dynamic'. Tejas Express has already been introduced.

Corporatisation of Production Units & Workshops: Chittaranjan Loco Works, Integral Coach Factory (Perambur), Diesel Loco Works (Varanasi), Diesel Modernisation Works (Patiala), Rail Coach Factory (Kapurthala), Wheel & Axle Plant (Bengaluru) and Modern Coach Factory (Rae Bareilly) will be corporatised as 'rolling stock companies'; 'hive off' workshops; en route to privatisation.

Redevelopment of stations: The process will be initiated for 'redevelopment of 50 stations' to be handed over to private players to have complete control over the stations lands, buildings, ticketing, parking, catering etc.

Banks

Bank Frauds by Corporates; Penalties on Public

Country's largest bank, State Bank of India (SBI), netted a windfall of 1,771.67 crore during April-November 2017, more than its second quarter profit, from the customers for non-maintenance of monthly average balance (MAB) of 3000, finance ministry data shows, reported PTI. SBI re-introduced MAB charges from 1 April 2017.

21 public sector banks (PSBs) and 3 major private sector banks have collected a whopping 5,000 crore from customers for non-maintenance of minimum balance in their accounts in 2017-18. Top 5 penalties earning banks are SBI and PNB in public sector and HDFC, Axis and ICICI among private banks. SBI is the topper with Rs.2,433 crore in

penalty collections from its customers followed by HDFC collecting Rs.590 crore, Axis Bank Rs.530 crore, ICICI Rs.317 crore and PNB Rs.211 crore.

Most account holders, who cannot maintain minimum balance are poor and middle-class people and the collection of money by penalising the common man at a time when fraudsters like diamond merchant Nirav Modi are fleeing after committing biggest banking frauds is unjust.

“On one hand, the government is running a campaign to associate more and more people with the banking system, while on the other hand, public sector banks are charging the saving accounts for not keeping a minimum balance,” PTI quoted an economist.

IT

CITU condemned IT Employees’ mass retrenchment

In a statement on 6 November, 2019 CITU expressed deep concern at the mass retrenchment of employees in IT sector. IT majors like Cognizant, Infosys, and Capgemini have announced retrenchment of thousands of workers. Capgemini has already laid off around 5000 workers. Cognizant reportedly is laying off 7000 employees. Infosys announced around 10% of its employees at different levels as surplus and 2200 at senior manager level and around 4000-10000 at the associate and middle level will be fired. All these IT multinational companies have been earning huge profits.

The firing operations are taking place on the pretexts of ‘growth plans’, ‘restructuring’, ‘role rationalisation’ etc, which are nothing but measures to maximise profits at the cost of the employees.

BJP government at the Centre and different state governments have remained silent spectators to this illegal mass retrenchment of IT employees. CITU demanded of the Central and concerned state governments to stop this illegal retrenchment of IT employees and take measures to protect them.

CITU reiterated its support and solidarity with IT employees and called upon them to build collective resistance against retrenchment. CITU commended the IT employees in different states, who are resisting these illegal measures of IT companies and are gradually getting organised to collectively fight this injustice.

CITU also called upon all its members and state committees to strongly oppose the illegal retrenchments by the IT multinational companies and stand in support of the IT employees.

Protest Actions

Against mass retrenchments IT sector, the Union of IT & ITES Employees (UNITE) in Tamilnadu raised disputes with the state labour authorities against large scale retrenchment in Verizon; AITE union in Kerala staged demonstration before TCS establishments; Karnataka IT Employees Union (KITU) in Bangalore and AIITE of Kolkata have raised disputes against retrenchments in respective states.

National Coordination Committee of IT & ITES Employees demanded immediate intervention of the Union labour minister on these illegal practices and impress upon the concerned managements and its Association NASSCOM to stop these unlawful activities forthwith.

Scheme Workers

9th Conference of AIFAWH

9th conference of All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH), held at Maya Ojha Manch in P. Padmini Hall at Vimal Ranadive Nagar in Rajahmundry of Andhra Pradesh on 17-20 November, 2019 was inaugurated by CITU general secretary Tapan Sen. Chairman of the reception committee Illa Venkatewara Rao, MLC welcomed the delegates.

In the inaugural session a resolution in support and for total participation in the 8 January 2020 workers countrywide general strike was moved by AIFAWH general secretary and CITU national secretary A. R. Sindhu. The resolution was adopted with thunderous applaud.

After inauguration, two processions with over 10,000 Anganwadi employees, attired in red, marched in procession culminating into a rally and public meeting at iconic Subramaniam ground. Another procession of delegates with their respective state banners and raising slogans in regional languages, drawing attraction and admiration of the locals, also converged to the meeting ground. Cultural programmes with progressive values preceded the meeting. The public meeting was inaugurated by CITU national president K. Hemalata and addressed by A. R. Sindhu, CITU state president Narsingha Rao and general secretary M. A. Gaffoor.

A seven-member presidium with CITU national leaders, AIFWAH president Usharani and Varalakshmi, presided over the delegates' session attended by 595 delegates and 73 observers from 24 unions in 23 states. A. R. Sindhu placed the three and half years report, since last conference, in 3 parts on policies and movements; organisation; and tasks of organising other working people and campaign against hate and discrimination.

The report noted AIFWAH's all India independent and joint struggles on policy issues lifting the movement in higher plane and with organisational consolidation; state unions conducting militant movements, independently and jointly, achieving success in wage increase ranging Rs.500 - 5000 per month. During the period, membership has grown by 15.27% but having bigger possibilities due to increased influence, spread and prestige of the organisation.

71 delegates took part in the discussion on the report. Delegate from Kashmir, Latifa, narrated the problems they are facing at present and their fight against privatization of ICDS. J&K delegates received warm welcome from all delegates expressing their solidarity by raising slogan "*Kashmir continue your fight for unity and democratic rights, the whole India is with you*"

Delegates self-critically assessed the ongoing struggles, narrated experiences; identified strength and weaknesses and made suggestions enriching the report to move forward.

On agenda - "Fight against hate and discriminations; Reaching out to various sections" - the conference emphasised on inculcating progressive values, rationality, respect to diverse culture and practices among the children; and challenging the existing retrograde discriminatory practices against women through cultural interventions.

The conference adopted several resolutions including – *Strengthening the ECCE in Anganwadi centres* - *Observance of 50 years of CITU* - *In support of the people of Kashmir* - *Solidarity with the struggle by students of JNU* - *Against attack on democratic rights* - *Against atrocities of Dalits and Adivasis* - *Against atrocities on women and children* - *On organising other sections*.

The conference resolved to re-orient work ideologically, politically and organizationally; and to build movement aiming for implementation of 45th ILC recommendations, for uniform facilities, for all scheme workers and for other toiling sections; for building scientific temper; communal harmony and against caste, ethnic and gender discrimination.

The conference adopted immediate tasks which include:

- Massive campaign and 10 lakh Anganwadi employees participation in 8 January workers general strike;
- Special campaign and action for quality ECCE in Anganwadis in place of the proposed 'Pre School Education' before the next academic year;
- National convention on 'hunger, malnutrition, hatred, fear and discrimination free childhood' in March/April;
- 35,000 Anganwadi employees mobilisation before the Parliament on 10 July 2020; and organising workshops on conference decisions – in states within 3 months and for Hindi speaking states in December.

- The conference also adopted 10 points organisational tasks including – strengthening all India and states centres; activating weak state unions; special plan for Hindi speaking states; special plan for 'Helpers' promoting in leadership; increasing membership to 6.75 lakh in 2020; cadre building at all levels and 25 cadres in each district; programme for education for all cadres, selection of syllabus, develop teachers during 50th year of CITU; strengthening ties with other mass organisations for issue-based movement; and organising other sections of scheme workers and developing coordination.

The cultural team of Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi union inspired the delegates with revolutionary songs and cultural programmes. On the evening of the third day there was a camp fire and various state delegations presented their cultural programmes.

The conference elected 75 member committee including 25 office bearers with Usharani, as president, A. R. Sindhu as general secretary and Anju Maini as treasurer.

CITU president K. Hemalata, who was the former general secretary of AIFAWH, throughout attended the conference and delivered concluding speech emphasizing on the possibilities of the movement and the importance of politicisation of cadres at various levels.

Conference was attended by 535 'Workers' and 77 'Helpers' (12.94%), 4 Mini Workers and 51 organisers. 26 were male delegates. 18.11% delegates were SCs, 6.34% STs, 31.44% OBCs and 5.7% were Muslim minorities. Class origin of the delegates is - 12% peasants, 29% agricultural workers and 23% from workers in unorganized sector. 62% of the delegates have family income below Rs.12,000 per month. Age groups of delegates were 40% between 40-50 years and 20% below 40 years. 24% of the delegates were graduates, 13% post graduates and 4 illiterates.

STATES

Delhi – NCR

Delhi Minimum Wage

Add VDA with notified Basic Rate of Wages: CITU

After Supreme Court's Order on 14 October 2019, the Government of NCT Delhi notified minimum wages on 22 October 2019 (*The Working Class, November, 2019*). The notified minimum wages are effective from 23 October, 2019.

On 23 October, 2019, the government notified two installments of DVA effective 1 April and 1 October 2019 and added the same with the earlier notified minimum wage of 03.03.2017.

The CITU Delhi state committee, in a memorandum to the labour commissioner on 22 November, has asked to add these two installments of VDA with the new minimum wages effective on and from 23.10.2019. The memorandum said that CITU Delhi state Committee is the intervener party in the case on which the Supreme Court has given Order.

CITU pointed out that under section 4(i) of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 (which is now subsumed in the Code on Wages and the same Section appears as Section 7(i) under Minimum Wage chapter in the Code), there is *Basic Rate of Wages*, which is revised at least once in 5 years, and Allowance linked with cost of living index (VDA), which is notified once in every 6 months. Both together constitute the Minimum Wage.

Government's submission in the Supreme Court, as noted in the 14 October 2019 Order, noted that Basic Rate of Wages was calculated on the basis of commodity prices as on 10.11.2018. After this, two installments of VDA on 1 April and 1 October 2019 fall due. Though these two installments of VDA were added with the earlier Basic Rate of Wages valid till 22.10.2019; the value of these two VDAs has not been added to the revised Basic Rate of Minimum Wage effective 23.10.2019, the memorandum pointed out. (23/11/2019)

Meeting of CITU Unions in Delhi NCR

64 unions' leaders and CITU functionaries from NCT Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (Ghaziabad and Noida) in National Capital Region (NCR) with CITU central leaders was held at CITU centre on 12 November.

CITU president K. Hemalata presided. Inaugurating the meeting she spoke about the background of 8 January 2020 All India Workers General Strike and called for concerted action in the NCR. CITU vice president J. S. Majumdar gave the industrial, economic and legal composition and framework of NCR and workers and trade unions worse general situation.

Leaders from several unions and CITU state general secretaries of Delhi and Haryana spoke giving the deteriorating conditions of the workers, huge joblosses due to economic slowdown, victimisation and repression of the workers and suppression of trade union rights by the managements in association with the state governments.

Addressing the meeting general secretary Tapan Sen emphasised to raise demand of common minimum wage in entire NCR in line with minimum wage in NCT Delhi and widest campaign on this demand among workers in entire NCR with handbills; campaign on 8 January strike; and proposed formation of CITU's NCR Coordination Committee with shop floor unions and CITU's area-wise / states representation.

Jammu & Kashmir

Electricity Workers Continuing Agitation

Due to imposition of central rule, lockdown and snapped communication in the erstwhile State of J & K, there is also suppression of trade union rights and movement. Yet, bravely facing such a situation, workers are continuing their struggle in J&K and have not surrendered their rights before the Modi government's armed forces. With restoration of some communication, belated news of such struggles are trickling in now in disjointed manner. An attempt is made to stitch those together as below.

On 12 September, Governor Satya Pal Mallick decided 'unbundling' of the J&K Power Development Department (PDD) into three companies in two union territories - to operate independently in Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir regions.

The administration said that unbundling became imperative as per the provisions of Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act. But it is also aiming as a major power sector reform stating, "Corporatization of power sector has already been done in rest of the country but in Jammu and Kashmir the same is pending since long". PDD is directly under the government and its employees are government employees. These are sought to be changed.

To oppose this move of unbundling of DPP, all unions formed a Coordination Committee; and under its banner the employees are carrying on strike and struggles for more than two months now. Joint demonstrations have taken place in all districts beginning on 17 September in front of the office of Chief Engineer, Maintenance and RI in Srinagar; followed by demonstration at powergrid station in Gurgaon district on 19 September; before Anantanag district Maintenance and RI office on 24 September; before Barmula district SI office on 25 September. Thousands of workers including daily wagers, coming from all districts, held a state level massive rally and staged demonstration before Bemina Power Complex in Srinagar on 27 September.

On 1 November, demonstrations were staged simultaneously in all districts. On 4 November the Coordination Committee informed the management of their intension to stage rally in front of the office of the Chief Engineer, Maintenance and RI in Srinagar. But, the administration sent para-military forces who barricaded the rally place with spike wire and physically prevented any gathering at rally venue. Undeterred, the worker broke Sec.144 and held rally at Press Colony in Srinagar.

The government has not even initiated discussion with the employees to remove their apprehension in respect of the future of DPP and of its large number of government employees. Still writing this report the workers are continuing their strike. (25/11/2019)

Uttar Pradesh

Electricity Employees PF Trusts Funds;

Huge scam with underworld links revealed; Protest and Strike by the Employees; Govt. assured funding if not recovered

Thousands of employees, including the permanent and contract workers and engineers, of UP Power Corporation Ltd (UPPCL), under the banner of their united forum of *Vidyut Karmachari Sanjukt Sangharsh Samity*, marched in procession with their families and held state level rally and demonstration before *Shakti Bhavan*, the UPPCL headquarter, in Lucknow on 14 November, 2019 and submitted memorandum to the newly appointed C&MD. Following this, 45,000 employees resorted to statewide 48 hours strike on 18-19 November demanding actions against massive PF scam, protection of their PF money and future security.

The UP Electricity Board was corporatised in 2000 as UP Power Corporation Limited having 5 subsidiaries being responsible for power transmission and distribution in the state. UPPCL established two in-house PF trusts – one for the employees before corporatization contributing in GPF and the other for the employees joining after corporatisation and contributing to CPF. Its chairman is also the chairman of these trusts. It has employees' representatives also. It has to meet once in three months, but its meeting was not held in several years.

In mid July news of huge PF scam of UPPCL broke out, an enquiry committee was set up which submitted report by end August confirming the irregularities and scam revealing the involvement of UPPCL top officials investing Rs.2,600 crores from employees trust funds to Deewan Housing Finance Ltd (DHFL) which is allegedly having links with underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's aide Iqbal Mirchi. Rs.1,600 crores due payment to the trusts has not been made by DHFL. Meanwhile, Bombay High Court stayed the payments of DHFL in the wake of its links with several shady companies and deals.

Shaken Yogi government removed the chairman and the C&MD of the UPPCL, filed FIRs against top officials and others and handed over the case to CBI. First arrested persons are Praveen Kumar Gupta, the then secretary of the Power Sector Employees Trust, and Sudhanshu Dwivedi, the then Director (Finance) of UPPCL.

Unsatisfied of government's actions, the Employees Sangharsh Samity resorted to protest actions including the strike demanding of the UP government to issue notification on ensuring recovery of these amounts and payment to the employees; removal of all top level officials responsible for the scam; immediate arrests of all culprits; and to issue white paper giving the details of investments of trust funds in private companies against prescribed norms.

Ultimately, and immediately after the strike, UP government on 23 November declared on the decision taken by Yogi government promising to return of the money of UPPCL employees in connection with the investment of over Rs 2,600 crore of trusts money with DHFL. If the money is not received from DHFL under the legal process, then the power corporation will pay. "If the power corporation has problems with money, then the trust will be given loan from the government's tax so that the employees' PF money can be returned," government's statement said. (25/11/2019)

Haryana

Honda Contract Workers On Strike Struggle against Retrenchment

On the ground of economic slowdown, Honda Motorcycles and Scooters India Private Limited at their Manesar plant in Haryana removed 410 contract workers from jobs on 4 November. About 3 months before, the company removed 500 workers on the same ground.

In protest, rest 1800 employed contract workers have started strike and indefinite sit-in inside the factory premises since 5 November and all the retrenched contract workers are staging simultaneous dharna and demonstration outside the factory gate. 2000 permanent workers in the plant have been extending support by providing food and other amenities to the striking contract workers.

The agitation of Honda contract workers at Manesar is getting wide sympathy and active support from other workers and unions in the adjoining industrial belt of Gurgaon and Alwar in NCR. CITU Haryana state committee and its president Satbir Singh are extending regular help and support and visiting the agitation place.

In retaliation, the management closed canteen and toilet facilities in the factory for the striking contract workers; and accusing the union of the permanent workers of extending support to contract workers strike, issued plant's work suspension notice on 11 November.

Instead of taking initiative to resolve the issue of mass retrenchment of workers, BJP government deployed hundreds of armed policemen inside the plant premises in service of the Japanese company.

Led by CITU's Satbir Singh and leaders of AITUC and others, thousands of workers walked in 15 kms long march from Manesar Honda plant to the Mini Secretariat at Gurgaon and submitted memorandum to the deputy commissioner on 22 November demanding early solution of retrenched contract workers. (26/11/2019)

West Bengal

Indefinite Agitation of Para-Teachers

In a statement on 22 November, CITU all India centre has congratulated the struggling Para-Teachers of West Bengal for their determined struggle; extended solidarity with their struggle for just demands; condemned the insensitive and autocratic state government and demanded to hold negotiation to meet their just demands; and called upon the working people from all walks of lives to organize solidarity programmes in their support and condemn inhuman and insensitive attitude of the state government.

Thousands of Para-Teachers, united under the *Para-Teachers Oikya Manch* are on indefinite day-night sit-in in front of education department headquarter in Kolkata since 11 November demanding parity in wages and other benefits with the permanent teachers. Around 50 Para-Teachers are also on indefinite hunger strike at the place of sit-in demonstration. Already, number of them on hunger strike fell ill and had to be admitted in hospital, some in critical conditions. One teacher died. CITU deeply condoled her sad demise. (26/11/2019)

A Victory in the Battle for Minimum Wage

6 Criteria of ILC & SC brought in Statute

The Central Government has notified Draft (Central) Rules of the Code of Wages for the opinion of the trade unions and of the public within 30 November, 2019. There are some retrograde points in the Rules on which CITU has sent its opinion to the government. However, the Draft Central Rules also shows government's retreat and a victory of the long-drawn united trade union movement for Minimum Wage.

One of the earlier 10 point and later 12 point demands of the united platform of all central trade unions and national federations of the country, for which workers resorted to several countrywide general strikes during UPA and later NDA regimes at the Centre in last one decade, is the Minimum Wage of certain amounts. The last being Rs.18,000 which was the national minimum wage for central government employees at January 2016 price level fixed by the 7th Central Pay Commission calculating on the basis of 5 criteria, determined by the highest national tripartite body for labour, the 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC), 1957 and the Supreme Court judgement of 1991 (*AIR 1992*) which approved the 5 criteria of 15th ILC adding the 6th criteria for determination of minimum wage.

Yet, neither the Central nor the State governments ever determined the minimum wage on the basis of these 6 criteria except the last notified minimum wage on 22 October 2019 in NCT Delhi after the Supreme Court's Order of 14 October, 2019.

Even in the Code on Wage, subsuming four wage-related labour laws including the Minimum Wages Act 1948, which was hurriedly adopted in the last budget session of the Parliament, Modi government did not include these 6 criteria. BJP government earlier tinkered with these criteria by appointing an 'expert committee' which submitted report on new 'Methodology' to determine Minimum Wage. CITU strongly objected to this report and outright rejected the same.

Modi government even involved ILO in the 'expert committee' for legitimacy. ILO called meeting of central trade unions to convince on the 'expert committee' report and its 'Methodology'. All central trade unions strongly rejected the 'expert committee' report and its methodology of calculation of minimum wage; stuck to 6 criteria of 15th ILC and 1991 SC judgement; held workers national mass convention on 30 September and declared nationwide workers general strike inter alia on this demand of 6 criteria based fixation of minimum wage.

In such a situation, Modi government had to reject its own 'expert committee' report and, after Supreme Court's Order of 14 October, 2019 on Minimum Wages in NCT Delhi, issued notification of Draft Central Rules on 1 November, 2019 incorporating the 6 criteria for the first time in the labour statute. (*see below*)

After, repeal of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and adoption of the Code on Wage, the State governments also have to formulate State Rules. Only after that, the Minimum Wages Advisory Boards are to be reconstituted for the fixation of Basic Rate of Wages and Allowance linked with cost of living index for different categories of workers as per Section 4(i) of the earlier Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and Section 7(i) of the Code on Wage.

As these 6 criteria for fixation of minimum wage have not been incorporated in the main Act itself and brought in the subordinate Central Rules, it will now be struggle for the trade unions to ensure incorporation of the 6 criteria in the respective State Rules, as it is in the portion of the Central Rules (*Given Below*).

In its written opinion, sent to the Central government, CITU has already demanded amendment of the Act itself to incorporate the 6 criteria as below.

CHAPTER II

Minimum Wages

3. Manner of calculating the minimum rate of wages. – (1) For the purposes of sub-section (5) of section 6, the minimum rate of wages shall be fixed on the day basis keeping in view the following criteria*, namely:-

- (i) the standard working class family which includes a spouse and two children apart from the earning worker; an equivalent of three adult consumption units;
- (ii) a net intake of 2700 calories per day per consumption unit;
- (iii) 66 meters cloth per year per standard working class family;
- (iv) housing rent expenditure to constitute 10 per cent of food and clothing expenditure;
- (v) fuel, electricity and other miscellaneous items of expenditure to constitute 20 percent of minimum wage; and
- (vi) expenditure for children education, medical requirement, recreation and expenditure on contingencies to constitute 25 percent of minimum wages;

*The provisions of the rule 3 are based on the criteria declared in the judgment of Workmen represented by Secretary vs. Management of Reptakos Brett. and co. ltd. and Anr., **1992 AIR 504** pronounced by the Hon'ble Supreme Court and of the recommendations of the 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC).

The above is portion of the notified Draft Central Rules of the Code on Wage incorporating the 6 criteria for fixation minimum wage.

-JSM
(24.11.2019)

JNU Students Movement And the People's Support

In a statement on 20 November, CITU strongly condemned the brutal police attack on the peaceful march to the Parliament of the students of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on the opening day of the winter session of the Parliament on 18 November which left at least 15 students grievously injured, including a visually-impaired student. The JNU students are struggling for over a month against hefty fees hike and demanding its total roll-back. These hefty fees hike is virtual "rustication" order for the students whose family incomes are below Rs. 12,000 per month who make up 40% of the student population in JNU, CITU said.

CITU extended its solidarity and support to the struggling JNU students and calls upon all CITU units to condemn the high-handedness of Delhi police, controlled by Modi regime, and the insensitivity of the University administration towards the plight of the poor and marginalized sections of the students.

CITU urged upon the Central Government and the HRD Ministry to initiate the discussion with them and to settle the issues at the earliest.

People's March

In support of the demands and struggle of the JNU students and in solidarity with them, thousands of members of the trade unions – CITU, AITUC and AICCTU - and of other mass organisations, including AIDWA and NFWI, youth organisations and other democratic sections of the people of Delhi marched from Mandi House to the Parliament on 23 November. They were joined by the students and teachers of Delhi University.

Police barricade at Parliament Street stopped the march where it converted into a mass solidarity rally and public meeting. The political leaders who addressed the rally include CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, former MP, who himself led movement of JNU students in 1970s as the then general secretary of JNU students union. Others who addressed the rally include CPI general secretary D. Raja, former MP, Manoj Jha, MP (RJD) and Yogendra Yadav. The speakers pointed out that this attack on vast number of JNU students' future is accordance with the New Education Policy of Modi government.

Indian Tax Payers Groups

Latest data were released by the income tax department for FY 2017-18. There are total of 2.9 crore salaried taxpayers. To protect the privacy of taxpayers, the income tax department does not reveal individuals names.

Following were the annual income groups of salaried tax payers

- Number of crorepati taxpayers in India stood at 97,689, a 20% jump over 2016-17;
- Super-rich club of Rs.100-Rs.500 crore salary bracket consists of 9 individuals earning average annual salary of Rs.128 crore each;
- 49,128 individuals earned above Rs.1 crore;
- 1.2 lakh people earned in between Rs.50 lakh and Rs.1 crore;
- Over 5 lakh people were in Rs.25 - Rs 50 lakh salary range;
- About 3.8 lakh persons earned annual salary between Rs.20 – Rs.25 lakh;
- More than 7 lakh earned salary between Rs.15 – Rs.20 lakh;
- More than 22 lakh earned salary between Rs.10 - Rs.15 lakh;
- 81.5 lakh earned salary between Rs.5.5 - Rs.9.5 lakh;

(From Live Mint)

The Hell Holes



These Workers are working in underground Sewerage without safety equipments which caused number of deaths in Delhi and NCR and other cities. They mostly belong to SCs, STs and Muslim minorities.

CITU Journal **The Working Class**

Be Subscriber
(Each copy – Rs. 10)

- **Individual Subscriber** - Annual subscription – Rs.100/- for 1 copy;
- **Agency** - Minimum 5 copies; 25% discount as commission;
- **Payment** - By cheque - Drawn in favour of “The Working Class” payable at Canara Bank, DDU Marg Branch, New Delhi – 110 002

By bank money transfer - SB A/C No. 0158101019569;
IFSC Code: CNRB 0000158;
With email / letter intimation

Petroleum Workers National Convention

(Report Page 5)



Dev Roye placing declaration



E. Kareem, MP addressing

Protest against Railways Privatisation

(Report Page 14)



Students at Sasaram



Employees at Ghaziabad

Workers Protests



(Left) UP Electricity workers at Lucknow (Report Page 21); (Right) Honda workers at Manaser in Haryana, CITU leader Satbir addressing (Report Page 22)

9th Conference of AIFAWH at Rajahmundry

(Report Page 17)



CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen inaugurating



Delegates Session



Section of Rally and Public Meeting