



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

New Year 2018 Greetings of 'The Working Class' to its readers

CITU Massive Rally at Agartala

(Report Page 18)



Opposing the anti-workers anti-people policies favouring the corporates with communal and divisive agenda of the BJP Government at the Centre;

Supporting pro-worker and pro-poor alternative policies with people's unity agenda of the Left Front Government of Tripura; and

For the eighth time victory of the Left Front to form government in Tripura



Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar and CITU National President K Hemalata Addressing

Inauguration of P. Ramamurti Bhawan

CITU's Trade Union Education and Research Centre



(Clockwise: P.R. Bhawan; Inauguration by Sitaram Yechuri; Unveiling the Statue of P. Ramamurti by A. K. Padmanabhan; Sitaram Yechuri Addressing the Meeting)

CITU inaugurated its P Ramamurti Trade Union Education and Research Centre on 15 December 2017, in the presence of hundreds of its members, supporters, well wishers and leaders of central trade unions. The trade union education centre envisaged to be developed as a permanent school for CITU cadres was named after the founder general secretary of CITU and a legendary leader of the working class movement of the country, P Ramamurti. The day was the 30th death anniversary of P Ramamurti. Comrade PR's daughters, advocate R Vaigai and Dr Ponni and his two grandsons were present at the inauguration ceremony. Panudda Boonpala, Director, ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for South Asia and Country Office for India, was also present.

The programme started with the hoisting of the CITU flag by its president Hemalata. A K Padmanabhan, vice president of CITU, unveiled the statue of P. Ramamurti. Sitaram Yechuri, General Secretary of CPI(M) and former MP, who was the chief guest, inaugurated the building and delivered the address as the main speaker in the meeting presided over by Hemalata. Swadesh Dev Roye, secretary, CITU, welcomed the gathering and introduced the team of architects, engineers and others who helped in the construction of PR Bhawan. Tapan Sen, general secretary of CITU, and R Vaigai also spoke. Amitava Guha, working committee member of CITU, proposed the vote of thanks.

Highly appreciating the efforts by CITU to provide political and ideological education to its cadre and constructing a trade union education and research centre, to fulfil the dreams of P Ramamurti, Vaigai promised to extend support through endowment for taking up research. Dr Ponni presented a cheque for Rs 10000 in the meeting for working women related activities of CITU and promised to donate the same amount every month for this cause. On behalf of CITU Hemalata thanked both of them.

A calendar with PR's photo, sponsored by COTEE (Central Organisation of Tamil Nadu Electricity Employees) was released on the occasion by A Soundararajan, vice president of CITU. Tapan Sen released a booklet on PR, authored by R. Vaigai and N. Ramakrishnan.

WORKING CLASS**JANUARY 2018****EDITORIAL BOARD****Editor****K. Hemalata****Working Editor****J.S. Majumdar****Members****Tapan Sen****A. K. Padmanabhan****Amitava Guha**

Inside**Page****Inauguration of
P Ramamurti Bhawan 2****Labour Welfare in
Modi Style 5
- A K Padmanabhan****CITU's Agitation against
Price Rise 6****Killing of Migrant
Worker Afzarul 8****Legal Notes 9****Industries & Sectors 11****States 18****International 22****Consumer Price Index 26**

FRDI Bill:**Threat to PSBs and Depositors**

In the background of global economic crisis in 2008, G-20 countries, led by USA, had prescribed 'bail-in' by the depositors for the failed banks instead of 'bail-out' by the governments. The public sector banks (PSBs) in India, which saved the country from the direct fallout of the world economic crisis at that time, have now been banded with private banks with same bail-in prescription in the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI) Bill 2017. It pre-supposes possible insolvency of government-owned PSBs.

The FRDI Bill on banks, insurance and other financial establishments was placed in the Monsoon Session of the Parliament and was sent to a Parliamentary Joint Committee. Facing countrywide protest, the government has now asked the Committee to postpone submitting its report in the ongoing Winter Session and submit the same in the next Budget Session.

FRDI Bill has the provision of constitution of a Financial Resolution Corporation (FRC) in line with Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation of the USA. The Bill empowers the Corporation to take actions like merger and liquidation of PSBs and other financial institutions and, in the process, transfer and remove the employees. Thus PSBs will be outside Parliamentary scrutiny.

Section 52 of the Bill provides bail-in of the banks, reeling under huge Rs.11 lakh crores bad loans to the corporates, by taking depositors money from their saving, current and fixed deposit accounts and converting those as equities of the failed banks!

In different countries, bail-in efforts had largely worked against depositors. In Cyprus, depositors lost almost 50% of their savings.

Under UFBU, 10 lakh bank officers and employees were on countrywide strike on 22 August and are in agitation against the Bill. Called by the 12 July committee, the trade unions and federations brought out a huge procession on 21

December in Kolkata demanding withdrawal of the Bill.

CITU units, its federations and unions have to take lead in defending the public sector banks and other financial institutions, which remain the backbone of country's economy; defend people's bank deposits which are under threat and demand withdrawal of FRDI Bill. .

Tributes to Comrade Sukomal Sen at CITU Centre



Rich tributes were paid to the veteran leader of national and international trade union movement Comrade Sukomal Sen in a condolence meeting at the all India centre of CITU at BTR Bhawan in New Delhi on 2 December attended by the national leaders of CITU including its president K. Hemalata, general secretary Tapan Sen, other central secretariat members; of AIKS including its general secretary Hannan Mollah, joint secretary Vijoo Krishnan and finance secretary P. Krishnaprasad; of AIAWU including its joint general secretary Sunit Chopra; of AIDWA including its vice president S. Punyavati; Delhi state leaders and activists of CITU, of the unions and of other mass organisations. Tapan Sen, Hannan Mollah, CITU secretary and WFTU dy. general secretary S. Dev Roye and others addressed the meeting. K. Hemalata presided.

Condolence

Comrade Shibani Sengupta



Veteran trade union leader Comrade Shibani Sengupta passed away on 10 December, 2017 in Kolkata at the age of 80. She left behind her daughter.

Comrade Shibani Sengupta was a leader of Kolkata road transport, CSTC Employees Union (CITU) and was its joint secretary for several years; was a member of CITU General Council and of West Bengal state secretariat of CITU; and was the founder member of

All India Coordination Committee of Working Women of CITU. She was a member of the Kolkata district secretariat of CPI(M).

All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) paid respectful homage to the departed leader.

WORKERS PEASANTS UNITY

19 January 2018 Worker Peasants Solidarity Day

Central leadership of AIKS, AIAWU and CITU held a joint meeting at BTR Bhawan on 7 December and decided to observe the *Worker Peasant Solidarity Day* on 19 January 2018 by jointly organising district level torchlight processions / mobilisations highlighting 7 demands – (1) Curb price rise, universalise public distribution system, ban forward trading in essential commodities; (2) Remunerative prices for the peasants as per the Swaminathan Committee recommendations; (3) Debt waiver for poor peasants and agricultural workers; (4) Minimum wage of not less than Rs.18000 per month for all workers; (5) Comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers; (6) Implementation of MGNREGA in all rural areas; amendment to the Act to cover urban areas as well; and (7) Food security for all.

Labour Welfare in Modi Style

A K Padmanabhan

In the 217th Meeting of Central Board of Trustees on 12 April 2017 an agenda was proposed by the EPFO on amendments to Employees Deposit Linked Insurance (EDLI) scheme. The proposal was to ensure a minimum benefit of Rs.2.5 lakhs for an insurance beneficiary and also to give a loyalty amount to the superannuating worker.

EDLI benefits are to be given to the heirs of the EPF subscriber, in the event of death while in service. This benefit is linked to the average balance in the account of the deceased subscriber in the provident fund (50%) and 30 times the average monthly wage of 12 months last drawn wages. Through an earlier amendment in September 2015, maximum benefit was increased to Rs.6 lakhs from Rs.3.6 lakhs. The present proposal, after its approval in the Pension and EDLI implementation Committee (PEIC) – a sub-committee of CBT – was to ensure a minimum benefit of Rs.2.5 lakhs.

The loyalty amount to be given as per the proposal had 3 slabs. This was to be given to the members on retirement on completion of 58/60 years of age and have completed minimum 20 years of contributory service as under.

S. No	Average Wages Per Month	Loyalty cum life benefit (in Rs)
1	Less than or equal to Rs. 5000	30,000
2	More than Rs.5000 but less Rs.10000	40,000
3	More than Rs.10000	50,000

This payment, according to EPFO was possible because of an accumulated corpus of Rs.18,119.29 crores up to the financial year 2015-16. This corpus is increasing every year. For EDLI payments only around 13% to 20% of annual contribution from 2006-07 to 2015-16 was utilized. Even after the increase in the limit of payment to Rs.6 lakhs, expenditure will be upto only 31% of the annual contribution.

The interest component every year is added to the corpus. There is enough fund to pay the increased benefits to the subscribers – This was the proposal from EPFO.

Less than 80% interest and the annual contributions is to be used to make this improvement in the EDLI scheme. In the year 2015-16, the return on investments was Rs.1,362.74 crores. Estimated annual outgo on Loyalty-cum-life benefit was Rs.692 crores. The total estimated outgo on EDLI fund was, according to EPFO, well within 80% of the total contribution received and interest earned. While this 80% for 2016-17 was Rs.2,230.96 crores, total out go estimated was only Rs.1,510.10 crores. While this proposal of EPFO was being discussed, two Government representatives raised certain doubts about sustainability of the scheme. After heated discussion, *“the proposal put forward by EPFO was approved with the modification that the scheme be implemented on pilot basis for two years during which period its viability may be assessed”*. This was a proposal by the Labour Minister who was presiding.

But, even after 7 months, this is still kept pending by the Government. This is the second issue, after the decision was taken in 2015 to stop deducting the commutation amount in the pension after the commuted amount is paid back, is kept pending by the Government till now.

Modi Government keeps in abeyance anything that is favourable to the workers while coming out with many proposals against the workers and implementing them.

CITU'S AGITATION AGAINST PRICE RISE

In response to CITU's all India call to observe Anti Price Rise Day on 13 December; CITU units and workers observed the Day in different States by bringing out processions, holding rallies, staging demonstrations and dharnas, holding public meetings and street corner meetings, submitting memoranda and burning effigies of the prime minister. Following are some available reports at CITU Centre.

Jharkhand

Rallies were held and demonstrations were staged in seven districts headquarters - at Jamshedpur of East Singhbhum, Ranchi, Bokaro, Koderma, Godda, Sahebganj and Pakur. Modi government's effigies were burnt at three places. (*Inputs: Prakash Viprav*)

Rajasthan

Rallies and demonstrations were held in district headquarters at Hanumangarh with 600 workers, at Sriganganagar with 350 workers and at Sikar with hundreds of workers participation. Dharna was staged in Chittorgarh. Mass deputation submitted memorandum in Jaipur. (*Inputs: B. S. Rana and statement*)

Punjab

CITU Punjab state committee held rallies and demonstrations in protest against record rise in the prices of essential goods and services were held at Raikot, Amritsar, Bathinda, Pathankot, Ropar, Ludhiana, Nabha, Ghanor, Mukatsar Sahib, Sangrur, Barnala and Jalandhar. The effigies of Modi government were burnt. Over 3000 CITU workers took part in these programmes.

Delhi-NCR

In Ghaziabad district, processions were brought out, demonstrations were held and effigies of prime minister were burnt at Shahibabad site-4, Ghaziabad-Meerut Road and near Coca Cola factory joined by about 500 workers.

In East Delhi Demonstration and public meeting were held at Sonia Vihar Labour Chowk.

In North Delhi, street corner meeting was held near Jahangirpuri metro station; and procession was brought out, demonstration was staged and effigy was burnt jointly by construction workers' and street vendors' unions at Bawana in North Delhi.

In South Delhi, procession was brought out and public meeting was held in Okhla Industrial Centre. (*Inputs: Anurag Saxena*)

Tamilnadu

Preparatory meetings were held in the districts. 41,000 leaflets were distributed among the public and 1,700 posters were pasted. Social media campaign was done. Demonstrations were staged in 32 districts with participation of 3,129 workers. Salem district rally was joined by 300 workers. South Chennai conducted 10 street corner meetings in which around 1,200 people participated and 10,000 leaflets were distributed. Kanyakumari district could not conduct the programme due to Okhci cyclone and North Chennai could not stage demonstration due to rains. (*Inputs: Gopikumar*)

Kerala

At 126 centres throughout the State, processions were brought out, public meetings were held and the effigies of the prime minister Narendra Modi was burnt. (*Inputs; E. Kareem*)

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

In Andaman and Nicobar Islands mass procession, demonstration, mass dharna etc were held at various places. At Port Blair, mass dharna was held at Tiranga Park from where a procession was brought out culminating in a public meeting. At Rangat procession was taken out from Rangat Bazar. At Kadamtala, a procession was taken out from Kadamtala bazaar. At Baratang, a massive procession by workers of forest, APWD, etc. was taken out at Nilambur.

Economic Health of the Nation

“CPI (consumer prices index) hits 15-month high; industrial output at 3-month low” headlined *The Indian Express* ‘Economy’ page on December 13.

“With prices rising and manufacturing slowing, the economy is still not out of the woods”, Modi government was politely reminded by *The Hindu* editorial on 15 December.

Connecting this inflation with GST, RBI had expected that recent cuts in GST rates on several retail goods and services “should translate into lower retail prices.”

Central Statistical Office (CSO) data on November, 2017 shows:

Inflation rates up

- Consumer prices inflation touched 4.88% - up from 3.6% in October and 1.5% in June;
- Food inflation was up from 1.9% in October to 4.42% in November: egg - 7.47%; vegetable 22.5%;
- Fuel inflation - 7.2%; up from 6.1% a month ago.

Production down

- Industrial production down by 2.5% in April-October, 2017; which was up by 5.5% for the same period a year ago;
- Consumer durables down by 6.9% in October, 2017; which was up by 1.5% same month in 2016;

Export down

- Export - 1.1% slump in shipments in October.

FM's Pre-Budget Consultation with Trade Unions

Union finance minister Arun Jaitley held pre-budget 2018 ‘consultation’ with the trade unions on 5 December attended by the representatives of all central trade unions (CTUs). CITU was represented by its president K. Hemalata.

Hemalata, in her intervention, said that this annual meeting should not be treated as ritual; demanded holding early meeting of GoM, constituted in 2015 with the finance minister as its chairman, with the CTUs to resolve their 12 point demands; instead of focusing on improving ‘ease of doing business’ to benefit the corporates, the government should focus on improving India’s position in ‘global hunger index’ and on closing ‘gender gap’ by increasing allocations for social sector including health and education, to the ICDS, National Health Mission, Midday Meal Programme etc that serve the poor, particularly women and children; to implement ILC recommendations on recognising ‘scheme workers’ as ‘workers’ paying minimum wages to them; and emphasised on resource mobilisation by taxing the rich who can pay, focus on employment generation by increasing public expenditure on infrastructure, filling up all vacant posts in various government departments including railways etc by fresh recruitment; implementation of MGNREGA in all rural areas and extending it in urban areas.

10 central trade unions jointly presented their views in a note.

Killing of Migrant Worker Afzarul

CITU condemned the barbaric murder of an innocent migrant construction worker Afzarul, from Malda district of West Bengal, in Rajsamand district of Rajasthan on 6 December by axing and burning alive; and videographing and uploading the episode in social media by Hindutwadi terrorists as an act of bravery against the purported 'love jihad'.

The killing of innocent minorities, to foment communal hatred and division, has repeatedly been taking place in the country, more so in Rajasthan, since BJP came to power at the Centre.

The Rajasthan State government is guilty of ignoring Supreme Court's order on protecting the innocents against such attacks and appointing nodal police officers in all districts. Instead, police in Rajasthan is busy in cover up exercise of such attacks.

Another vital issue involved in the gruesome murder of Afzarul is about protection of safety, rights and livelihood of migrant workers, both inside and outside the country, which have become important issues of the trade union movement at national, international levels and in ILO.

CITU demanded of Rajasthan government immediate arrest the culprits, involved in the murder of the migrant worker Afzarul and in the hate propaganda through social media; adequate compensation to the bereaved family; implementation of Apex Court's order against such attacks and measures to protect all migrant workers in the State.

Construction Workers Federation of India (CFWI) issued statement condemning the killing of migrant construction worker Afzarul and wrote to the union minister for labour demanding to

ensure safety of migrant construction workers by Central and Rajasthan governments; punishment to culprits and compensation by Central and State governments of Rajasthan and West Bengal and job to a member of the family.

Rajasthan Nirman Mazdoor Union (RNMU) of CITU by a letter addressed to the chief minister on 8 December condemned the killing of Afzarul and demanded Rs.50 lakh compensation to the bereaved family, in addition to the statutory provision of Rs.

5 lakh under Construction Workers Welfare Act, and ensuring stringent punishment to the culprits.

Protesting against the killing of Afzarul, the migrant construction worker from Malda district of West Bengal, in Rajsamand district of Rajasthan on 6 December, thousands of different sections of the people brought out procession from Lenin statue at Dharmatala to Entaly market on 9 December in response to the call of the Left Front. Similar protest marches were held in other places in the State.

(From: CITU, CFWI, RNMU statements & Ganashakti)

Legal Notes

Som Dutta Sharma

Principle of “equal pay for equal work” Reiterated

A Bench of two Judges of Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice while deciding a case titled State of Punjab and Others Vs. Jagdish Singh and Others (2017) 1 Supreme Court cases 148 that the principle of “equal pay for equal work” expounded through various decisions of Supreme Court constitutes law declared by Supreme Court, which is binding on all courts in India and as such is also applicable to temporary employees performing the same duties and responsibilities as regular employees.

The court was considering a challenge to the decision of Full Bench (3 Judges) of Punjab and High Court in Avtar Singh Vs. State of Punjab (2011 SCC Online P&H 15326) wherein the full Bench had concluded that such like temporary employees were not entitled to the minimum of the regular pay scale, merely for the reason that activities carried on by daily wagers and the regular employees were similar. Two exceptions made by the High Court were (1) a daily wager, ad hoc or contractual appointee against regular sanctioned posts, if appointed after undergoing a selection process based upon fairness and equality of opportunity to all other eligible candidates; and (2) but if daily wagers, ad hoc or contractual appointee are not appointed against regular sanctioned posts and their services are availed continuously, with notional breaks by the State Government or its instrumentalities for a sufficient long period i.e. for ten years, men daily wages, ad hoc or contractual appointees shall be entitled to minimum of the regular pay scale without any allowances on the assumption that work of perennial nature is available and having worked for such long period of time, an equitable right is created in such category of person.

This important issue came to the Apex Court with following factual matrix:

1. A single Judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court in Rajinder Singh Vs. State of Punjab in Civil Writ Petition no. 536 of 1986 decided on 05.02.2003 had directed the State to pay to the Writ Petitioners (who were daily wagers working as Pump Operators, Fitters, Helpers, Drivers, Plumbers, Chowkidars etc.), minimum of pay scale, revised from time to time with permissible allowances, as were being paid to similarly placed regular employees. In appeal filed by the State against the decision of Single Judge, the Division Bench (Two Judges) in State of Punjab Vs. Rajinder Singh (2009 Supreme Court Cases Online P & H 125) set aside the decision of Single Judge holding that temporary employees were not entitled to the minimum of the pay scale, as was being paid to similarly placed regular employees.
2. Another Division Bench of the same court in another case State of Punjab Vs. Rajinder Kumar (2010 SCC Online P & H 13009) had dismissed the appeal filed by State of Punjab holding that the petitioners (working as daily wager Pump Operators, Fitters, Helpers, Drivers, Plumbers, Chowkidar, Ledger Clerk, Ledger Keepers, Petrol Men, Surveyors, Fitter Coolies, Sewer men and the like), were entitled to minimum of the pay scale, along with permissible allowances (as revised from time to time), which were being given to similarly placed regular employees.
3. A Single Judge in Avtar Singh v. State of Punjab noticed the conflict between two decisions of two Division Benches referred the matter to a larger Bench three Judges.
4. Appeals from the decisions of Division Benches and from the decision of Full Bench were preferred to Supreme Court and that is how the Apex Court decided this bunch of petitions in this Judgment.

The issue which arose for consideration of the Supreme Court was:

Whether temporarily engaged employees (daily wage employees and Ad hoc appointees, employees appointed on casual basis, contractual employees and the like), are entitled to minimum of regular pay scale, along with dearness allowances (as revised from time to time) on account of their performing the same duties which are discharged by those engaged on regular basis, against sanctioned posts ?

The Supreme Court took a bird's eye view on the legal position declared by it on the underlying ingredients which govern the principle of "equal pay for equal work".

The Supreme Court surveyed its earlier decisions on the different facets of the controversy and delineated the parameters. The court distinguished the decision in *Secretary State of Karnataka v. Uma Devi* (2006) 9 SCC 514. After extensive discussion on the legal propositions culled out from the earlier case law the Supreme Court concluded its opinion as under:

"There can be no doubt that the principle of equal pay for equal work would be applicable to all the temporary employees concerned, so as to vest in them the right to claim wages on a par with minimum of the pay scale of regularly engaged government employees holding the same post".

Departmental Enquiry Representation by qualified Lawyer on behalf of delinquent employee

In departmental enquiry the employees are often pitted against heavy odds whereas the department or the employer appoints legally trained persons as Enquiry Officer and presenting officer. The employee is asked to either present his own case or engage a co-worker/ co-employee. In such cases, the workman finds himself at disadvantageous position which is sufficient to tilt the balance in favour of the employer or department. Natural justice, however, requires a level playing field for both. The Hon'ble Supreme Court tried to strike a balance in 1983 in *Port Trust of Bombay Vs. Dilip Kumar Raghavendranath Nadkarni* (1983) 1 SCC 124 in following words:-

"12... In our view we have reached a stage in our onward march to fair play in action that where in an enquiry before a domestic tribunal, the delinquent officer is pitted against a legally trained mind, if he seeks permission to appear through a legal practitioner the refusal to grant this request would amount to denial of a reasonable request to defend himself and the essential principles of natural justice would be violated".

Eight years thereafter, the Supreme Court in *J.K. Aggarwal Vs. Haryana Seeds Development Corporation Ltd.* (1991) 2 SCC 283 held denial of such permission as unfair.

Taking note of above two judgments, the Supreme Court in *Ramesh Chandra Vs. Delhi University* (2015) 5 SCC 549 held that if any person who is or was a legal practitioner, including a retired High Court Judge is appointed as an enquiry officer in an inquiry initiated against an employee, the denial of assistance of a legal practitioner to the charged employee would be unfair. The Supreme Court was considering a question on application of a delinquent employee seeking permission to be represented through a legally trained and qualified lawyer should be allowed or not where the enquiry officer was a retired Judge of the High Court and presenting officer had sufficient experience of presenting cases before the enquiry officer.

(Som Dutta Sharma is the General Secretary of All India Lawyers Union)

STATES

Rajasthan

No Sand, No Work for Construction Workers, Facing Starvation

United in joint platform, 8 unions' representatives of construction workers in Rajasthan submitted memorandum to the chief minister on 23 December demanding reopening of sand mines in the state taking permission from Supreme Court.- and adopt a transparent sand mining policy.

In absence of sand from mines, about 1 crore of people directly or indirectly engaged in construction work are affected and facing starvation, the memorandum said. The delegation consisted of convener Morcha Harendra Singh from CITU union, Bijay Singh Tambar, Harkesh Bugalia, Ramprasad Gurjar, Madanlal Parikh, Babulal Berwa, Anita Devi and others. *(Inputs: Harendra Singh)*

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Scheme Workers

Central Trade Unions Called for Joint Countrywide Strike on 17 January

Three and half years back, 45th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) recommended that all scheme workers, working under various government schemes, are 'recognised as workers', 'paid minimum wages' and 'given social security including pension'.

More than one crore scheme workers working under various central and state government schemes include 27 lakh employees in Anganwadi and Mini Anganwadi under ICDS scheme; 28 lakh workers in Mid Day Meal scheme and 10 lakh ASHA workers under NHM. Additional Lakhs of workers are also working under SSA, NRLM, NCLP, Small Savings Schemes etc. These schemes deliver basic services of health, nutrition, education etc to the mass of the population. These workers are not recognised as workers, are not paid minimum wages nor have any social security benefit. In the name of 'honorarium' or 'incentive' they are paid a pittance.

Further, Modi government is moving in winding up these crucial schemes by drastic budget cuts and structural changes including privatisation of the schemes involving corporate and corporate NGOs. The beneficiaries are actually being excluded in the name of linking of Aadhar and bank accounts. The government is introducing cash transfers in place of universal services of these schemes including those which ensure food security. Workers remuneration and schemes facilities are affected due to budget cuts and attempt to dismantle the schemes.

The three major federations of scheme workers had separately and jointly conducted many struggles to save the schemes and for better service conditions. AIFAWH, MDMWFI and AICCAW of CITU jointly organised district level protests and met MPs in December 2016. Following these, CITU 15th Conference gave call for one day countrywide strike of scheme workers on 20 January 2017 which was a grand success. There were numerous local and state level struggles.

On the last day, 11 November, of the Workers Mahapadav nearly one lakh scheme workers, mostly women, participated. The mahapadav decided to organise one day all India strike of scheme workers. 10 central trade unions jointly decided scheme workers united all India strike and district level demonstrations on 17 January, 2018. A statement was issued. In the pre-budget discussions with the union finance minister, the central trade union submitted joint memorandum inter alia demanding financial allocation to implement the recommendations of the 45th ILC.

Statement of Central Trade Unions (2 December 2017): Gave call for One day All India Strike of Scheme Workers and District Level Joint Demonstrations on 17th January 2018; demanding:

(1) Implement the recommendations of the 45th ILC on scheme workers: recognition as workers, minimum wages not less than Rs. 18,000 per month and social security including monthly pension not less than Rs.3000 to all scheme workers. Give coverage of EPF and ESI to scheme workers;

(2) Adequate financial allocation in the Union Budget 2018-19 for the Centrally sponsored schemes including ICDS, MDMS, NHM, SSA, NCLP etc to ensure increase in wages for the workers

to the level of minimum wages and universalisation of the schemes with adequate infrastructure and quality services; and

(3) No privatisation of the schemes in any form and no subversion by way of cash transfer or exclusion of beneficiaries.

Sales Promotion

Field Workers Massive Rally in Mumbai

Under the banner of their national federation FMRAI, coming from all States and Union Territories in India, with the flags and banners of State unions and of CITU; about 20,000 sales promotion employees, generally known as Medical and Sales Representatives, marched on the streets of Mumbai raising slogans in their respective State's language converging to the historic Azad Maidan for holding an all India rally and mass meeting on 13 November in the city where most of the pharma companies are headquartered. About one thousand strong contingent from West Bengal could not join the rally as the special train carrying them reached late after the rally.

Addressing the rally CITU national vice president A. K. Padmanabhan condemned the authoritarian rule of the BJP-led Central and Maharashtra State governments and said that the field workers rally in Mumbai and united workers Mahapadav in Delhi have the commonality – one challenging the Fadnavis government of Maharashtra and other the Modi government at the Centre for looting the country and destroying its sovereignty; robbing the workers and the peasants of their rights and livelihood; for unbearable burden of price rise on the people further aggravated by demonetisation, GST; cutting people's welfare for funding the corporate degrading healthcare and education; and added with these are communal and divisive agenda.

FMRAI general secretary Santanu Chatterjee in his address explained the field workers demands and the demands of the people which include access to medicines and 'zero GST' on all medicines. Due to struggle, the demand for 'statutory working rules' has been recommended by the tripartite labour standing committee for the sales promotion employees. Lack of implementation and violation of SPE Act are the main causes of agitation of the field workers.

CITU leaders, state president Dr D. L. Karad, general secretary M.H. Shaikh and Mahendra Singh greeted the field workers for the successful rally and fighting spirit. FMRAI's Maharashtra state unit, MSMRA general secretary Srikanth Phopse also greeted the participants. FMRAI president R. Viswanathan presided.

A delegation with Santanu Chatterjee, D. M. Deshpande, K. B. Kadam and T Kameswar Rao met the State's principal secretary of labour and submitted memorandum on the issues and demands.

Demonstrations in Front of Companies

After the rally on 13 November at Azad Maidan, large number of company-wise field workers marched to the head offices of respective pharmaceutical companies in Mumbai and staged dharna and demonstration protesting against the recent attacks by the managements and raising company-wise pending demands on bargaining issues, against victimizations and for implementation of law. Demonstrations and dharnas were staged in front of eight companies - Elder Pharmaceuticals, Wallace Pharmaceuticals, Svizera Healthcare of Maneesh Pharmaceuticals, Macleod Pharmaceuticals, Meyer Organics, Wockhardt Ltd and Alembic Pharmaceuticals; and next day before USV Pvt Ltd. A deputation submitted memorandum to ICPA Health Product Ltd.

IT & ITES

Mass Victimization of Employees

Verizon Data Services India (VDSI) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the US-based Verizon Communications Inc. On 12 December, VDSI resorted to mass retrenchment of 993 employees of different categories throughout the country in the name of 'role rationalisation', largest number being in Chennai and Hyderabad. More than 200 employees have been sent out from its Taramani and RMZ units in Chennai.

The modus operandi of the management was to call the employees individually to meet the 'role rationalization panel', get their signatures by force on the pre-drafted 'resignation letters' and 'full & final settlement agreement' and escorting them out by musclemen posted as security personnel.

"The bouncers pushed me back into my chair and held me by my shoulders till I signed the document. It was an awful experience and I can't begin to tell you how demeaning it was. I was performing and they treated me in this terrible manner", stated a victimised employee who had to sign on the dotted line.

6 major IT firms including Cognizant, Infosys and Wipro removed about 4,000 IT workers in the first six months of this fiscal year.

Union of IT and ITES Employees (UNITE) in Tamilnadu immediately submitted to the labour commissioner a complaint letter against the mass dismissals of employees by VDSI. The union is helped by CITU Tamilnadu state committee. On 13 December, the labour commissioner had sent one labour inspector to VDSI premises in Chennai for investigation and had called the management for discussion same evening. This was followed by a tripartite meeting called by Deputy labour commissioner-2 of Chennai on 15 December. In the meeting, VDSI management denied mass retrenchment / termination and intimidation of the employees. The union UNITE raised industrial dispute which has now been admitted in conciliation as case no. 7882/2017 and the next date of the proceedings is on 9 January, 2018.

In a statement, the UNITE appealed to all employees across the IT and ITES industry to stand by and express solidarity with the victimised employees, who sacrificed best part of their lives for the benefit of company, and against the unjust action of VDSI management.

(Inputs: K. C. Gopikumar)

Tea

Against Firing and Injuring Tea Garden Workers, CITU Protests Bandh and Protest in Assam

Protesting against firing and seriously injuring 15 tea garden workers by the owners of Bogidhala Tea Estate in presence of police in Golaghat district of Assam a day before; spontaneous and total Golaghat district bandh took place on 14 December called by different mass organisations of tea tribes supported by CITU. Workers stopped work and came out on the streets from many tea gardens in different parts of the State, hanged the effigies of the owners and burnt State labour minister's effigy. Same day, CITU Assam state committee brought out a militant protest rally and held demonstration in the state capital Guwahati which was joined by the organisations of students, youths, women and peasants.



Protest Rally



Police lathi charge

In a statement, issued from New Delhi on 14 December, CITU denounced the firing and said that while the workers went to the bungalow-office of the tea garden owners asking for long overdue earned wages, which caused starvation and distress of the workers, the arrogant tea garden owners suddenly opened fire on the peaceful assembly of the workers in front of the tea garden office injuring them.

"It is most deplorable that the workers have to face bullets from the garden-owner for demanding their unpaid earned wages for the work already done. Non-payment of earned wages to workers on time is a serious offence on the part of the employers." The employers are emboldened to commit such atrocities against the workers under BJP rule in the State and in the Centre pursuing their agenda of 'ease of doing business', CITU said. CITU demanded immediate arrest of the tea garden owners, to initiate stringent action for their criminal offence, immediate payment of all pending wages and adequate compensation to all the injured workers.

Workers and people's agitation forced the reluctant police to arrest two culprit garden owner brothers and the chief minister to declare graded compensations to the injured workers. But, the injured workers neither got the declared compensation nor free treatment though admitted in government hospitals. While the local leaders of the workers brought these before the press after submitting memorandum to district administration, police suddenly resorted to lathi charge and beating them with rifle butts seriously injuring Bidyut Saikia, Debabrata Saikia and Mrinal Kumar Nath. As their conditions deteriorated, they were shifted from district hospital to Guwahati GNRC hospital. Against the betrayal of the chief minister and the police attack on the tea workers leaders, people again resorted to Golaghat district bandh on 20 December. (From: CITU statement and Ganashakti)

Electricity

Facts about Unchahar NTPC Power Plant Accident

On 6 November, a fact finding team of state Kisan Sabha, with its general secretary Mukut Singh, and CITU, with Rahul Misra from its centre, along with district leaders, and a CPI-AITUC state team jointly visited the accident site in NTPC power plant at Unchahar in Rae Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh where 43 workers died and several others were hospitalized in severe injured conditions due to the accident on 1 November. (*Working Class; December 2017*). Leaders of CITU and AITUC plant unions accompanied them.

The accident took place in the newly installed 6th unit of the plant. Different local sources reported that the unit was showing trouble consecutively for 3 days prior to the accident. The local management sought permission from higher ups to shut down the unit to correct the technical defects. But, NTPC higher management turned it down forcing the unit to operate in defective condition. Ultimately, it led to the accident with large number of deaths and injured. It was also reported that the alarm system was non-functional; there were serious deficiencies in safety measures and gross violation of labour laws.

Those who died and injured due to accident include three AGM rank officers and the rest all were contract workers. There are 446 permanent and about 3000 contract workers in the plant. Doubts were expressed about the total number of the contract workers working at the time of accident and entry of their names in the master roll. Immediately after the accident, the remaining contract workers were sent out in darkness to distant places to keep them away from any enquiry.

The plant officials including GM-HR, AGM and a senior manager met the fact finding teams, handed over a list of employees and workers, who died and were injured, and informed about the arrangements made for the treatment of injured persons. They also handed over a list of the petty contractors and informed about the appointment of enquiry committees on different issues concerning the accident. It was also informed by them that NTPC declared Rs.20 lakh compensation to the family of each worker who died; Rs.10 lakh to each of those seriously injured and Rs.2 lakh each who had minor injuries in addition of free medical treatment. The central and state governments separately announced additional compensation.

We raised the issue as to why the new unit was commissioned without proper safety check and why it was kept in operation despite showing trouble for days prior to accident; why for unknown reason the plant was totally blacked out from 10pm to 2.30am; why the exact number of contract workers working in the plant at the time of accident was kept secret; how the master roll disappeared; how the labour laws violations are taking place; and why the persons, who died and injured, were being discriminated. Management had no satisfactory answer.

AIKS-CITU team demanded compensation from NTPC of RS.50 lakh each to families of those who died and Rs.5 lakh each to other injured workers, and better free treatment for them, in addition to the declared Rs.10 lakh compensation to each of the seriously injured; strict enforcement of all labour laws and safety measures; regularisation of contract workers; urgent measures to stop recurrence of such accidents in future; high level impartial enquiry and exemplary punishment of the persons found guilty. (*Inputs: Mukut Singh*)

Defence

Against Pension Discrimination in BDL

In a letter to the union defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 13 December, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP drew her attention to the ongoing agitation, including relay hunger strike since 15 November, jointly by the unions of all affiliations in Bharat Dynamics Ltd (BDL), the public sector Mini Ratna company engaged in defence production, in all its locations in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh against deprivation of pension benefit of 7% of basic plus DA as management's contribution in pension fund for non-executive employees which is applicable to the executives since 1 January, 2007.

This is against DPE guideline on employees' remuneration and social security benefits, which are identical for both executives and non-executive employees; It is immoral and unprofessional on the part of BDL management, including the top person, who managed to get this benefit for themselves denying the same for the workers and other employees. Tapan Sen

demanded same pension benefit for both executives and non-executives effective 1 January, 2007.

Ultimately, on 21 December, the management and the recognized Bharat Dynamics Employees Union of CITU reached an understanding on management's contribution of 6% of basic plus DA towards pension applicable to the non-executive employees effective retrospectively from 1 January, 2007. This will also be reviewed at the time of next wage revision which is due on 1 January, 2017. On reaching the understanding agitation was called off.

Public Sector

Venkatesh Commits Suicide Protesting Sale of DCI Employees Intensified Agitation

N. Venkatesh (29) ended his life by committing suicide on 4 December and left behind a suicide note registering his last emphatic protest against the move of the Central government for strategic sale of remaining of 73.47% share of the public sector Dredging Corporation of India (DCI) with its corporate office in Vishakhapatnam. Venkatesh joined HR department in the corporate office of DCI in 2012. He was the lone bread earner of the family with his two sisters and parents.

The employees including officers went on lightening strike next day demanding of Modi government to revoke its decision on privatisation of the DCI; Rs.50 lakh compensation to the family of Venkatesh and a job to one family member. They also served ultimatum to the government about intensifying agitation including indefinite strike. Already a strike notice has been served. The employees paid floral tributes to Venkatesh at the site of their relay hunger strike, continuing since 27 November. As decided in a meeting, convened by CITU on 5 December, all PSU unions staged protest demonstrations in front of all industrial establishments in Vishakhapatnam next day

P.K. Sethi, Joint General Manager, said that 'The Government wants to sell it for just Rs.1,500 crore, undervaluing its assets.' DCI was among the top 10 dredging companies in the world, he said.' (From: *The Hindu*)

CITU statement from Delhi condemned Modi government for its decision to privatise DCI and for being directly responsible for the suicide of Venkatesh. Shockingly, when Venkatesh met local BJP M.P. and a BJP MLA of the area in a delegation and requested their intervention, both of them refused on ground that the BJP government at the Centre had already taken decision to privatise DCI, statement said.

DCI has been earning profit and generated huge assets including liquidity. DCI has been maintaining national maritime and navigational facilities to all major and minor ports facilitating international trade and cargo movement and expanding its dredging services outside the country earning precious foreign exchanges. Handing over DCI to private business is another instance of transferring national asset to private capital by the corporate-captive Modi government, said the statement.

CITU demanded sufficient compensation to the family of the deceased and employment to a member of the family; extended full support in solidarity with the ongoing struggle of the DCI employees and appealed to the working class of India for support.

The employees of DCI, including the executives, were on 3 days successful strike on 20-22 December against the move of strategic sale of DCI. At DCI head quarter in Visakhapatnam, the strike was 95% while for non-executives it was 100%. Floating staff of DCI at Cochin also joined the strike for a day on 20 December. Relay hunger strike is continuing even after the strike and are receiving support from all the corners. Leaders from NUSI and MUI, the unions of seamen, visited the venue of agitation and declared Rs.2 lakh from each union to the family of Venkatesh.

Telecom

Nationwide 2 days strike in BSNL

At the joint call of all 13 unions and associations in BSNL; non-executive and executive employees were on 2 days nationwide total strike on 12-13 December in all departments, in all circles, in all states in India. The strike was also joined by the contract and casual workers. Main demands of the strike was early third wage revision, pending since 2011; removal of anomalies in the second pay revision; and opposing the proposal of handing over 90,000 BSNL towers in private hands as a subsidiary tower company of BSANL.

Striking non-executive and executive staff staged demonstrations in front of their respective establishments raising slogans on their demands and condemning the local management for feeding false report of strike to their bosses; and holding meetings addressed by the leaders of all unions and associations accusing the government's policies and actions as the main reason of BSNL losses.

On successful conclusion of the strike, all unions and association in the joint forum in a meeting congratulated the workers for the success of the strike and decided to hold national convention on 8 January to decide on future course of action.

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]

Tripura

Workers Massive Rally

Calls for Victory of Left Front in Assembly Election

CITU held a massive state level rally of the workers, coming from all 8 districts and 23 subdivisions, joined by other toiling sections, at Vivekananda Maidan in the state capital Agartala on 26 November. The rally was in protest against the curtailment of trade union rights, withdrawal of various welfare schemes of the working people by the Central government; and for protecting the rights and dignity of the working people of the state through the formation of the Left Front government in the State for the record eighth term. The entire Agartala town turned into a sea of red.

Addressing the rally, CITU national president K. Hemalata narrated about Modi government's attacks on the workers and other toiling sections and about the people's rising countrywide protests converging into lakhs of workers united national Mahapadav on 9-11 November and huge united Kisan Sansad on 20-21 November in front of the Parliament; both concluding with declaration of countrywide future movement including Satyagraha, courting arrests and strike. Large number of workers and peasants from Tripura also joined these protests before Parliament.

Hemalata said that the workers, farmers and others are asking where is the 'Achhe Din'; where are 2 crore jobs every year; where is MSP for the agricultural products adding 50% on production cost; all of which were promised by Narendra Modi and BJP before election.

The workers are seeking minimum wage as was decided by tripartite meeting; scheme workers like Asha, Anganwadi, Mid day meal workers are demanding to be treated as regular workers as was recommended by 45th Indian Labour Conference. But Modi government showed least sympathy to their issues.

Ensuring victory of the Left Front, with more votes and more seats, in the ensuing Assembly election, the workers and the people of Tripura will give impetus to the countrywide workers and peasants' struggles. This will also ring the farewell bell of Modi government, Hemalata said.

Addressing the huge workers rally, Tripura chief minister Manik Sarkar explained the misrule of Modi government attacking on the workers including unorganised sector workers constituting 95 per cent of the country work force; privatisation of PSUs which are people's assets; adverse impact of the demonetisation and GST on people, small and medium entrepreneurs and traders and betrayal of BJP's poll promises to the poor masses and working people.

While RSS-BJP-led Modi government at the Centre is working for corporates, the Left Front government in Tripura is pursuing an alternative policy in favour of the poor, toiling masses and the middle class. The Left Front government is taking welfare measures for the poor and working people including 33 pension schemes covering 4 lakh people; workers right to bargain; incentives to the small and medium entrepreneurs and self-help groups; schemes for skill development at the government initiative; introduction of the Unorganized Workers Welfare Scheme etc. This alternative policy must be highlighted before the nation through the victory of the Left Front in the ensuing assembly election, frustrating all conspiracies, Manik Sarkar said.

Pointing out the discriminatory and disruptive role of Modi government at the Centre towards Tripura, Manik Sarkar said that Tripura performed best in the country in MNREGA consecutively for

several years. But, the Central government drastically reduced allocation resulting in 82 days work last year to 42 days work this year. Tripura has been deprived of about Rs.4,000 crore due to the abolition of the Planning Commission.

On the other side, BJP has been trying to create unrest and communal passion through different means desecrating temples and shrines; murders of journalist Shantanu Bhowmik and driver Jiban Debnath. Prime minister's office is hobnobbing with IPFT, the wing of banned NLFT extremists, in respect of 'separate state' demand which is absurd and infeasible.

The working class has a great responsibility in this electoral battle, Manik Sarkar said. He urged them to maintain living contact with everybody irrespective of political affiliation and remove all confusions by placing facts with reasons and logic.

Addressing the rally, CITU state general secretary Sankar Prasad Datta, MP said that the rights and dignity that the working class, achieved in Left Front regime, shall be retained under a better Left Front government. Thus, it is a duty of the working people to ensure the victory of the Left Front in next year's Assembly election.

Presiding over the rally, CITU state president and minister Manik Dey also highlighted the Left Front government's various measures in favour of the workers.

Odisha

MDM Workers United Morcha Achieved Huge Success

The United Forum of Mid Day Meal Workers of CITU, AITUC and AIUTUC unions brought out a 15000 strong Mid Day Meal workers march in procession from Bhubaneswar railway station and staging demonstration and dharna and holding huge rally at the police barricade in front of the State Assembly on 4 December raising national demands of scheme workers and state demands for MDM workers. The rally and public meeting was addressed by State leaders Lambodar Nayak, Isani Sarangi, Lovakanta Swain, Ramesh Jena, Upendra Sharma, Khoramoni Mohanta from CITU; Souribandhu Kar, Narayan Reddy, Bijaya Jena from AITUC; and Bisnu Das, Jaysen Mehar from AIUTUC. Radharaman Sarangi of CITU, Debashis Ghose of AITUC and Rajkishore Mallick of AIUTUC presided. A delegation of the agitating unions met the State minister for school and mass education, submitted memorandum and held prolong discussion on the demands. The dharna was concluded on reaching an agreement with the minister, on behalf of the State government, and the unions representatives on increased wage of Rs.1000, Rs.400 from January and further Rs.600 from April, 2018; one saree annually worth Rs.250; all removed workers would be retained; and all other demands would be discussed in future meeting.



(Inputs: Ramesh Jena)

ASHA Workers United Indefinite Dharna Ended in Success

ASHA workers unions in Odisha, affiliated to CITU and AITUC, jointly staged indefinite day-night dharna before the State Legislative Assembly since 17 November raising all India demand of scheme workers



on implementation of 45th ILC recommendations on recognition as workers, payment of minimum wage, not less than Rs.18000, social security like PF, pension, insurance; and immediate demands to State government including increase in incentive, ensuring regular monthly payment, Rs. One lakh as superannuation benefits on attaining 60 years of age etc.

On 27 November about 10,000 ASHA workers, jointly organised by CITU and AITUC unions, marched from Bhubaneswar railway station and, on reaching Lower PMG Road connecting the government Secretariat and the Assembly, converted into a huge rally, blocking the road, which was addressed by national and state leaders Bishnu

Mohanty, Lambodar Nayak, Janardan Pati, Dusmant Das of CITU; Souribandhu Kar, Narayan Reddy of AITUC; Puspa Das of AIDWA, Jameswar Samantray of AIKS; and ASHA workers unions leaders Nalini Sahu and Sura Jena.

A joint delegation from the rally met the State health and family welfare minister and held discussion on the demands. The minister agreed to fix monthly remuneration for ASHA workers, immediately after the Assembly Session, in addition to the incentives and agreed to hold discussion on other demands on a later day. On this achievement, the indefinite day-night dharna was called off.

Punjab

Victory of Militant Struggle of Anganwadi Employees

Anganwadi employees in Punjab on Sunday called off their statewide protest after the chief minister Amarinder Singh assured them that the government would not shut the centres after pre-primary classes are started in primary schools, reported PTI from Chandigarh on 26 November. The school education, the social security and the women and child development departments worked out guidelines for the smooth functioning of Anganwadi centres on the premises of primary schools, said a government statement.

Led by AMU, Anganwadi employees union of CITU in Punjab, thousands of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers were on 67 days long militant statewide agitation demanding withdrawal of Punjab government's decision.

More than 25,000 Anganwadi employees held victory rallies at Mohali, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Bhatinda, Gurdaspur, Sangrur and Tarantaran which were greeted and congratulated by several national and state leaders of CITU and AMU including CITU state general secretary Raghunath Singh, Anganwadi federation AIFAWH president Usha Rani and AMU president Harjeet Kaur and general secretary Subhash Rani.

Right to Education Act provides for free education between 6 to 14 years of age. Pre-primary education is not part of it. But, Punjab government proudly claimed, "We are the first state to introduce these in all our primary schools." School education minister Aruna Chaudhary said "everything would be free of cost"... We will try to provide mid-day meals and uniforms in the coming months."

"This move will take away our jobs. We will continue to protest till the decision is reversed," said Usha Rani, national president of the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Federation, reported The Print on 17 November.

In protest on 24 October, thousands of Anganwadi workers and helpers gheraoed the chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh's residence in Patiala. Several of the leaders were arrested and put in jail.

There are almost 27,000 Anganwadi centres in Punjab, run under the ICDS, taking care of children between 0-6 years of age. Each Anganwadi has a woman worker and a helper. The centres provide supplementary nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers and children between six months to three years of age, and pre-school education to children between three to six years of age. Almost 9.5 lakh children and 3 lakh women are registered in these centres in Punjab.

Uttar Pradesh

Domestic Workers State Rally before Assembly

Jointly organised by Gharelu Kamgar Mahila Sangthan (CITU) and Asangathit Kamgar Adhikar Manch, hundreds of domestic workers, coming from different parts of the State, brought out procession and held rally in front of the State Assembly in Lucknow on 4 December. A memorandum on 15 point charter of demands was submitted to the State labour minister. The charter includes demands for comprehensive central legislation for labour laws and social security coverage; registration by labour department and issuing identity cards; minimum wage notification, fixation of working time, weekly off days and paid holidays and leave facilities; gratuity and pension; constitution of welfare board in line with construction workers etc. The rally was addressed by AIDWA leader Kiran Moghe and Madhu Garg, Neelam Pandey, Smita Tiwary and others.



The rally was the conclusion of month long signature campaign in the residential areas of domestic workers in Lucknow, Agra and Kanpur and in other places. (Inputs: Madhu Garg and Ganashakti)

Andhra Pradesh

Commemorating P. Satya Narayana and N. Prasada Rao Seminar on Constitutional Values and Danger of Communalism



Andhra Pradesh state committee of CITU and M. B. Vignana Kendram jointly held a seminar on *Dilution of Constitutional Values and Danger of Communalism* at the 600 capacity full auditorium of M. B. Vignana Kendram in Vijayawada on 26 November as an annual event to commemorate Parsa Satya Narayana, founder president and Nanduri Prasada Rao, the founder general secretary of CITU in Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing the seminar, as the main speaker, former Supreme Court judge Gopala Gowda urged the working class of India and the Left parties to safeguard the secular fabric of the country, on which rests its greatness, and protect the values of the Constitution. CITU state general secretary M.A. Gafoor criticised those who are preaching patriotism, but are not respecting the people of the country. CITU state president Ch. Narasiga Rao presided and narrated the role of P. Satya Narayana and N. Prasada Rao in building workers movement and CITU in the State. S. Rajendra Prasad and B. Tulasi Rao of M.B. Vignana Kendram also spoke on the occasion.

INTERNATIONAL

Move of US Imperialism on Jerusalem Condemned



The decision of US President Donald Trump recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and shifting the US Embassy there from Tel Aviv was condemned in a meeting organised by All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation (AIPSO) and joined by CITU and other mass organisations and their activists and students of Jamia Milia Islamia Central University at BTR Bhavan in New Delhi on 21 December. The programme was part of WFTU's call for worldwide protest on the same issue during 15-21 December.

AIPSO general secretary Nilotpal Basu conducted the proceedings and initiated discussion. Those who addressed the meeting include the deputy chief of Mission of Palestine embassy Dr. Wahel Albett Rekhi. CITU president Hemalata, AIPSO presidium member D. Raja, MP, Its other general secretary Prof. Sonya Gupta and CITU national secretary and WFTU dy. general secretary Swadesh Dey Roye.

The speakers condemned the move of the US imperialism creating new tension and war situation, blocking peaceful solution and threatening other countries in the United Nations. The meeting emphasised in defence of the worldwide accepted position of two States with pre-1967 boundaries, independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital and for vacating Israeli occupation from Palestine's territories.

The speakers condemned Modi government for scrupulously refusing to criticize the US decision despite world-wide opposition and condemnation and demanded to declare its position in line with long-accepted Indian position on Palestine question.

The meeting concluded with resolve to carry on intensified struggle against US imperialism and Israel and in defence of Palestine.

International Conference on Health Industry

WFTU and FNIC jointly organized an international conference on health industry in Paris, France on 26-27 October, 2017 attended by 160 delegates including 23 foreign delegates. CITU was represented by FMRAI general secretary Santanu Chatterjee. The theme of the conference was '*For healthcare industries dedicated to the good sake of mankind*'.

Shantanu Chatterjee, in his topic-wise intervention, highlighted the poor healthcare infrastructure in India and complete apathy of the Central government to meet the health needs of the vast population.

The conference declaration noted that worldwide healthcare is among the most profitable industries with high growth rate despite world economic crisis; 73% of healthcare products, medicines and medical devices, are consumed by only 23% of world population in the richest countries while 2 billion human beings have no access to these; about high prices of healthcare products; these are produced for profitability and not according to actual needs of the populations particularly in the developing countries.

Therapeutic advances saves thousands of lives, yet, millions of people die every year due to lack of access to healthcare or for their inability to pay. The healthcare industry majors have the support of the



governments. It is no longer admissible in the 21 century that thousands die just because of the industry prioritise more profits in the capitalist system.

FNIC CGT, WFTU and all the attending unions will do everything to make the 'access healthcare' and the 'right for health' a reality for every inhabitant of the planet. They appealed to the ruling powers in France, Europe and worldwide and international institutions to take action to root out healthcare industries from the clutches of capitalism, out of their financial strategies. The healthcare industries should be monitored by legislation and under the supervision of a single public health service.

Just like water, energy, housing, food; healthcare products are mankind's common property and should not remain in the hands of the capital which has its only objective of making profit to enrich even more a minority of the world's population. (*Inputs: Sahntanu Chatterjee*)

WFTU Working Women Asia Pacific Regional Conference

A R Sindhu

WFTU Asia Pacific Regional Conference of Women Workers was held in Hanoi, Vietnam on 6-8 December 2017 as a prelude to the World Working Women's Congress to be held in Panama on 8-10 March 2018. The conference was hosted by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL). Other than Vietnam, 14 women trade women unionists from Bangladesh, India, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Sri Lanka, representing 10 affiliated unions, participated including A. R. Sindhu of CITU and K Mallika of AITUC from India.

The conference was inaugurated by WFTU vice president and VGCL president, Bui Van Cuong. General Coordinator in WFTU headquarter, Anda Anastasaki explained the general conditions of women workers under the capitalist system in the world - about discriminatory working conditions, lack of healthcare and social security, vulnerability and violence including sexual exploitation and racial discrimination faced due to migration, double burden of domestic work, domestic violence and violence against women, lack of maternity benefits etc. She put forward the WFTU perspective of the leading role of women in trade unions and called for a unified fight on the demands of working women and expressed hope to develop a common strategy at the World Working Women's Congress.

A. R. Sindhu of CITU said that Asia Pacific region is the hub of surplus extraction by exploitation of the working class and through primitive accumulation which are being intensified further as the imperialist countries are passing on the burden of aggravating systemic world capitalist crisis on the developing countries. Women workers are the worst victims of this exploitation in Asia Pacific region. It is most priority task to



unionise them in class oriented trade union movement; to expose and demystify the unpaid labour done by women in various forms; to reiterate their role as part of the working class and in the struggle to end exploitation.

She narrated the impact of imperialist neoliberal policies of the ruling dispensation in India. According to McKinsey Global Institute report, improving gender parity at the workplace can help India add a whopping 2.9 trillion dollars to its GDP in 2025, she said.

She also explained the advancement made by CITU and its All India Coordination Committee of Working Women in organising the working women, increasing membership of women workers in CITU from 7.7% in 1985 to 32.36% in 2015 of its total membership. At present CITU has 26.2% women as national office bearers.

She suggested that WFTU affiliates take up in depth studies on newer forms of economic and social oppression, on their global chains and inter-linkages, on utilization of feudal patriarchal values for exploitation in various parts of the world; disseminate these information; strengthen their networking to popularize the issues and demands among the working class in general and working women in particular; unionise them; and take up higher forms of militant struggles.

The representatives from other countries including Shahana Ferdousy Lucky of Jatiyo Sramaik Federation and Kormi Barua of BTUC from Bangladesh; Anah Dianah of KASBI from Indonesia; Evelyin Chan Siew Yen and Nur Fatihah Suhaila Binti Mohd Noor of NUBE from Malaysia, Rosalinda Gobrin of Workers For People's Liberation and Dorina Clare Juco Naraval of National Congress of Workers from Philippines; Visakah Shamalie Suriyabandara Kannangara of All Ceylon Trade Union Federation from Srilanka; and Soheila Jelodar Zadeh of Workers' House from Iran also shared their similar experiences and views on the impact of neoliberal policies; increasing casualisation and underemployment, withdrawal of social security, health education and nutrition and all other public utility services, changes in labour laws to withdraw various rights of the workers including maternity benefits; the stories are almost the same in all the countries. The competition to attract investment in Asia Pacific region in various sectors of production like manufacturing, textiles and garments with the cheapest labour is making women workers more prone to exploitation and this process is aggravated by the systemic crisis of capitalism. Increasing violence against women is the order of the day. Distress migration and the resulting vulnerability are adding to it. Very poor representation of women in elected bodies and decision making positions are also common in these countries.

The representatives also shared their experiences of increasing resistance by the workers and the trade union movement in these countries. There were a few achievements and advancements in establishing women workers rights. The first woman Member of the Parliament from Iran, Soheila narrated her initiatives to

bringing some new legislation for more maternity benefits for women workers. She has taken the initiative to bring a social security package for women workers.

The different story was of course from Vietnam. The delegation from VGCL consisted of representatives from various departments of Women Workers' Organisation - international, administrative, information and education, legal affairs etc apart from different sectoral unions in textile, information and communication, agriculture, transport, industry and trade, building, health, railway and education. Trinh Thanh Hang, director of women workers department of VGCL made a presentation in two parts: the role of women workers in socio economic development and the role of trade unions in promoting women's role. 48.23% of the workforce in Vietnam is women. Vietnam ranks 65 out of 144 countries in Gender Gap Index in the ranking of World Economic Forum in 2016. (India ranks 108 in 2016). It has the highest proportion of seats held by women in Parliaments in East Asia and ranks 18 in the world. It has more than 25% women representation in all levels of people's councils and the National Assembly which is on an increase. Women play a significant role in the production and service sectors.

VGCL has more than 50% women membership. It now has 46.4% women in workplace level executive committees, 37.6% at immediate upper level, 27.33% in the VGCL executive committee and 25% presidium members. VGCL is making conscious efforts to promote women's leadership role and in taking active part in the formation of laws and decrees on women workers' rights and also in supervising policy implementation. The union is taking up the challenges of disparities at IZs and EPZs and the gender imbalance situation in some sectors which employ mostly women. In response to a question the VGCL representative said that women's unpaid labour, including housework, is not counted in the GDP of the country. A representative from a workplace union narrated her first hand experience of collective bargaining in an EPZ which achieved maternity benefit and increase in wages.

The participants suggested to take up an intensified campaign and struggles on the demands of equal wages, equality in opportunity, maternity benefits and healthcare, prevention of sexual harassment and violence, more representation in decision making, migrants worker's rights etc. The conference decided to have more coordination and solidarity actions and information sharing and networking for higher struggles. There was a demand for evaluation of women's unpaid labour in every country's GDP. The conference ended with the concluding remarks by Nguyen Thi Thu Hong, vice president VGCL and vote of thanks by Anda.

The visit to the Ho Chi Minh Museum was an inspiration to the participants. The VGCL had also arranged a tour to Nih Binh province for the participants.

Tapan Sen on Companies (Amendment) Bill

Participating in the debate in Rajya Sabha on the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2017 on 19 December; CITU general secretary and MP Tapan Sen pointed out about the omission of SMEs in the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' of the Bill; and emphasized on the need to support the them, facing decline, by separate set of relaxations and allowances to them.

He demanded no relaxation or allowance to large companies who created more than Rs.11 lakh crore of NPAs; and are huge tax defaulters, even after all concessions, of more than Rs.4/5 lakh crores a year. Despite these, the amendment proposed more liberalisation for them.

He opposed and demand to drop (i) the provision of lifting of prohibition on 'Insider Trading' of 2013 Act which will promote speculation and not putting the capital into employment generating and wealth generating activities as claimed in the Statement of Objects and Reasons; (ii) the clause exempting a class of foreign companies from the registration and compliance regime; (iii) shifting several provisions out of the Act and putting those under rules which will undermine the authority of Parliament and making those not enforceable; (iv) diluting clauses 35 and 36 by showing less net profit by exempting the items so that their obligation under the corporate social responsibility is further eased out when there is no enforceability provision of private companies to spend 2% of their net profit on corporate social responsibility despite exaggerated claim about this 2013 Act.

He also pointed out the absence of 'accountability' clause though mentioned in the Statement of Object and Reasons. There is no clause to eliminate the fake companies; on taking money from the market and vanishing having small investors in ransom.

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

State	Centre	Sep. 2017	Oct. 2017	State	Centre	Sep. 2017	Oct. 2017
AP	GUNTUR	277	281	MHR	MUMBAI	293	295
	VIJAYWADA	277	279		NAGPUR	318	317
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	282	285		NASIK	295	295
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	267	269		PUNE	276	278
	GUWAHATI	250	253		SHOLAPUR	295	296
	LABAC SILCHAR	261	261	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	300	304
	MARIANI JORHAT	248	249		ROURKELA	305	310
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	243	246	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	298	305
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	300	308	PUN	AMRITSAR	286	287
CHD	CHANDIGARH	284	283		JALANDHAR	286	288
CHS	BHILAI	318	316		LUDHIANA	276	278
DLI	DELHI	263	262	RJN	AJMER	263	263
GOA	GOA	297	294		BHILWARA	276	278
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	272	274		JAIPUR	273	274
	BHAVNAGAR	272	269	TN	CHENNAI	261	266
	RAJKOT	274	275		COIMBATORE	270	272
	SURAT	263	264		COONOR	281	286
	VADODARA	263	268		MADURAI	281	287
HRY	FARIDABAD	260	259		SALEM	270	273
	YAMUNANAGAR	276	275		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	285	295
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	258	258	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	293	298
J&K	SRINAGAR	264	265		HYDERABAD	249	252
JRK	BOKARO	279	284		WARRANGAL	288	289
	GIRIDIH	303	305	TRP	TRIPURA	264	266
	JAMSHEDPUR	332	335	UP	AGRA	310	312
	JHARIA	309	313		GHAZIABAD	279	283
	KODARMA	326	329		KANPUR	291	292
	RANCHI HATIA	326	328		LUCKNOW	277	277
KNT	BELGAUM	294	296		VARANASI	282	285
	BENGLURU	288	290	WB	ASANSOL	307	306
	HUBLI DHARWAR	304	304		DARJEELING	256	266
	MERCARA	304	300		DURGAPUR	312	313
	MYSORE	297	298		HALDIA	312	316
KRL	ERNAKULAM	295	297		HOWRAH	270	274
	MUNDAKKAYAM	303	304		JALPAIGURI	279	283
	QUILON	323	328		KOLKATA	270	276
MP	BHOPAL	280	281		RANIGANJ	254	256
	CHHINDWARA	292	297		SILIGURI	269	271
	INDORE	259	261				
	JABALPUR	282	283				
					ALL INDIA INDEX	285	287

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Anganwadi Employees' Victory Rallies in Punjab

(Report Page 20)



Amritsar



Jalandhar



Ludhiana



Mohali

Field Workers Rally in Mumbai

(Report Page 12)



Medical and Sales Representatives Held All India Rally
in the Historic Azad Maidan on 13 November

CITU's Protest against Price Rise

(Report Page 20)



Rourkela, Odisha



Ranchi, Jharkhand



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