



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

New Year 2019
Greetings to All Readers
of The Working Class



9 January: CTUs National Leaders Leading Rally in Delhi.
AIKS general Secretary Hannan Mollah also joined (right)



CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen Addressing the Rally



Comrade Nirupam Sen

CITU is deeply grieved at the passing away of Comrade Nirupam Sen, former member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) and former member of the national working committee of the CITU. He died at the age of 72 after prolonged illness in a hospital in Kolkata in early morning of 24 December. He left behind his wife, a son and a daughter.

Comrade Nirupam Sen beginning as a leader of student movement became an outstanding leader of the workers and peasants movement in Bardhaman district of West Bengal. He faced police repression during Congress rule and had to remain underground. Comrade Nirupam Sen was elected thrice in West Bengal Assembly and was the Industry and Commerce Minister in the Left Front government for two terms.

In his death, the working class and the Left movement lost a valuable leader. CITU pays respectful homage to Nirupam Sen and conveys its heartfelt condolences to his comrades and family members.

Comrade (Dr.) Amit Sengupta



A medical practitioner by profession, a national leader of the movement for people's scientific temper and of people's health related issues including strengthening public health system, a frontline fighter against drug multinationals and their patent regime, a strong supporter of trade unions and participant in democratic movements; Comrade (Dr.) Amit Sengupta died in an accident in the seacoast at Goa on 28 November, 2018 at the age of 60. He left behind his wife and only son.

Comrade Amit Sengupta's funeral and condolence meetings were personally attended by the CITU leaders at the centre including the president and general secretary to pay respectful homage to the outstanding leaders of people's movement Dr. Amit Senpugta.

CITU conveys its condolences to his bereaved comrades and family members.

WORKING CLASS

JANUARY 2019
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Editorial

Call of 8-9 January Strike

Change Government, Change Policies

Successful countrywide workers general strike on 8-9 January, 2019, with solidarity actions of Kisans and other toiling sections, has sent out two clear signals – (i) remove this BJP-led corporate – communal combine Modi government at the Centre in the coming Parliamentary election 2019; and (ii) set workers – kisans – people's alternate policies of governance. People's movement and people's power will assert before and after election for policy change and will not end only by removal of the present government.

8-9 January, 2019 nationwide workers general strike and people's resistance were the culmination of workers and kisans countrywide series of independent and joint united actions in which CITU played an important role. After Modi government came to power, CITU, apart from building its own independent actions, on one side joined the central the trade unions and national federations for workers countrywide two successful general strikes on 2 September 2015 and 2016; 3 days national Mahapadav before the Parliament on 9-11 November 2017 and the 2 days general strike on 8-9 January, 2019; on the other side joining hands with AIKS and AIAWU for successful 9 August, 2018 Jail Bharo movement and 5 September Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally and other mutual solidarity actions cementing workers-peasants unity brick by brick.

AIKS and other kisan organisations on their part conducted years' long struggle against Modi government's land acquisition ordinance; rally in Delhi and hugely impacted Kisan Mukti March on 28-29 November 2018 demanding loan waivers and MSP on agri-products uniting 207 kisan organisations; and impressive state level movements in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

The people's discontent and workers and peasants class actions saw the defeat of BJP-led governments in the recently held five states assembly elections and all three new governments of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh announcing loan waivers for the peasants as their first policy decisions.

The working class of India is in the move. There will be attempt to subvert this growing class unities; suppress the working class role and their burning issues; and distraction by the middle class liberalism and reformism.

While fighting for government and policy changes, the working class has to remain vigilant against any attempt to disrupt unity of the classes and distraction from its historic role and goal.

Modi Government misled Supreme Court on Rafale Deal

In its judgement of 14 December 2018 on the PIL cases filed by some individuals on Rafale Deal, the Supreme Court pointed out three things (i) that, the CAG has 'published' a report on this question (Rafale Deal); (ii) that, in turn, it has been examined by the Public Accounts Committee; and (iii) that their 'report' has been tabled in the Parliament.

The judgement said "The pricing details have, however, been shared with Comptroller and Auditor General [hereinafter referred to as "CAG"], and the report of the CAG has been examined by the Public Accounts Committee [hereinafter referred to as "PAC"]. Only a redacted portion of the report was placed before the Parliament and is in public domain."

Dismissing the petitions, the Court also cited "jurisdictional limitations" and "lack of domain expertise in reviewing the merits of the defence procurement agreement".

Factually incorrect statements have appeared in the Supreme Court's judgement on Rafale Deal because (i) CAG has not published any report in Rafale deal; (ii) PAC has not examined any report of CAG on Rafale deal and (iii) no report (whether full or redacted) was ever placed in the Parliament or is the same available in 'public domain'. Then who is responsible for such false statement in the Supreme Court judgement?

Cat is out of bag. In an affidavit before the Supreme Court, Modi government, taking shelter of the word 'is' in place of the word 'was', stated that 'is' (supposedly) denotes only procedure, not actually happened, and 'was' denotes that it actually happened and, therefore, 'was' should be replaced by 'is' in the judgement in relation to the above incorrect statement.

By this submission, Modi government also admitted that false statement appeared in the judgement and prayed for 'correction', again trying to mislead the Supreme Court. Particular "correction" in the judgement is not sufficient. The judgement was based on false submission by the government and, therefore, the judgement no longer holds good.

While Modi government is telling that it is the Supreme Court which made the mistake, the opposition is blaming Modi government for deliberately misleading the Supreme Court and, taking note of the Supreme Court's observation that the Court has jurisdictional limitations and lack of domain expertise, demanded Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to examine the whole deal which only has the power to call for evidences and further enquiry. If Modi government has nothing to hide, why should they run away from Parliamentary scrutiny to which they are accountable for all their omissions and commissions?

- JSM

Double Loot of Public Fund

With the current approval of Rs.41,000 crores, total amount to recapitalizing the public sector banks (PSBs) reached to Rs.1,06,000 crore this year. Instead of recovering the loans from Modi's crony corporates, who took loans from PSBs and ran away from the country, recapitalization of PSBs is the route for channelizing further lending to the crony corporates making it double loot of public money.

[From: CPI(M)'s Polit Bureau statement; 21 December, 2018]

Historic 8-9 January 2019

Countrywide Workers General Strike

Estimated around 20 crores of workers in all sectors and in all states and union territories in the country joined the 2 days nationwide workers general strike on 8-9 January, 2019 in response to the joint call of 10 central trade unions – CITU, INTUC, AITUC, HMS, AIUTUC, AICCTU, TUCC, UTUC, SEWA and LPF; and of almost all independent national federations of all sectors of employees. Only exception was RSS-affiliated BMS, which deserted the trade unions' joint platform just on the eve of first general strike on 2 September 2015 after BJP assumed power at the Centre. However, their workers in large number joined 8-9 January strike in several sectors in different parts of the country.

Strike was participated by workers of all sectors including organised sector, both public and private including multinational, government and quasi government; scheme workers, unorganised sector workers across the country.

The strike was supported by wide sections of the people. AIKS and other Kisan organisations, independently and jointly, and with agricultural workers unions organised solidarity actions and, along with the workers and other toiling sections, resorted to *Rail Roko* and *Rasta Roko* in several parts of the country. They also gave call of simultaneous *Gram Bandh* (rural strike). Women, youths and students in large number, under the banner of their respective organisations, also joined in pre-strike campaigns; and rallies and demonstrations on strike days. Striking workers, their families and dependents, and those who were in solidarity actions and supported the strike across the country constituted almost half of India's total 133.92 crore population.

8-9 January 2019 strike was for 10 demands, which are being pursued unitedly by the trade unions since 2009. 2 more demands – no change in labour laws; and no FDI in defence, railways and insurance - were added before 2015 strike to resist Modi government's attacks in these areas. This strike was also in support of peasants

Despite imposition of ESMA in Delhi and threats and intimidation of the employees, large scale arrests and state-sponsored violence in West Bengal, Tripura and in some other states the strike became historic. With people's participation workers strike created *Bandh* like situation in several states like in Kerala, Assam and other north eastern states, Odisha and in several districts of Karnataka.

Brihanmumbai Electric Supply & Transport Undertaking (BEST) has resorted to penal action on the striking workers by banning the strike. A day before the strike the Authority went to the Industrial Court which declared the strike as illegal under Maharashtra Essential Services Act. The Senior Personnel Manager (Welfare) has ordered the striking workers to evict tenements they have been allotted to stay although the Court order had not directed to such action. CITU has protested to this action in a letter to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

Road transport was paralysed in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Uttarakhand, in 22 districts of Madhya Pradesh; interstate buses service in Jammu and Kashmir was affected.

In West Bengal, despite TMC terror road transport, both passenger and goods, remained severely affected. Several industries including jute and engineering industries remained closed. In Tripura despite BJP government's attacks strike was more than 70% in transport and in shops and establishments. In the tribal areas of Tripura there was total bandh.

The strike was highly visible in the industrial areas of NCR Delhi, 24 Paraganas, Hooghly

and Howrah districts of West Bengal, in the oil refineries across Assam, in Pune, Nashik and Aurangabad industrial areas in Maharashtra, in the industrial areas in Bengaluru, Mysore etc in Karnataka, in Ludhiana in Punjab, in the Bokaro, Ranchi, Adityapur Gamharia industrial areas in Jharkhand, in the engineering clusters in Baroda, Surat, Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Junagarh and Ahmedabad in Gujarat and the industrial clusters in Hyderabad and surrounding districts in Telengana etc. It was total in multinational companies like BOSCH, CEAT, Crompton, Samsonite in Maharashtra and in all the units of Volvo, Toyota and its subsidiaries in Karnataka. All over the country, workers struck work and marched in processions in thousands and held rallies and public meetings.

Strike was near total in the coal industry affecting production and dispatch. It was almost total in Vizag and Salem steel plants and also in all the iron-ore and coal mines under steel industry, around 50% in Rourkela steel Plant and Bhadravati, while partial in others steel plants. The participation of contract workers in most of the PSUs was total.

Electricity employees in many states joined the strike en masse. Though the railway employees did not join the strike, in several places they extended support. The railway contract workers and goods shed workers, safai karmacharis joined the strike in several states.

The tea gardens in Assam, West Bengal and Kerala were totally closed due to the strike. Unorganised workers, including beedi workers, construction workers, loading and unloading workers, shop employees, private hospital employees etc joined the strike in a big way in many states and organised Road-roko and Rail-roko in many places paralysing the normal traffic.

Scheme workers including anganwadi employees, ASHAs, midday meal workers and others joined the strike en masse across the country and participated in demonstrations.

Strike was total in insurance and BSNL and near total except in a few banks in the banking sectors. Central government employees participated in a massive manner in the strike, which was total among the postal and income tax departments. Atomic energy employees participated in a big way. It was total among medical representatives all over the country. In several states state government offices wore a deserted look due to the strike. In Tripura, though teachers were compelled to attend schools, there were no students. In several states including West Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand etc, police resorted to arrests. Thousands of CITU activists and Left party leaders were arrested. In Nimrana industrial area in Alwar district of Rajasthan, police resorted to lathi charge, teargas shelling and filing false cases against trade union activists.

Against Attack on Strike

CITU in a statement on 7 January condemned Lt. Governor of Delhi for imposing ESMA against Electricity Employees and Engineers in NCT Delhi from joining workers general strike on 8-9 January, 2019. This notification was issued under Haryana ESMA, 1974 using Government of India's Home Ministry's GSR extending the same in Delhi. ESMA notice is issued selectively against joining the strike call of CITU. Brihanmumbai Electric Supply & Transport Undertaking(BEST) has resorted to penal action on the striking workers by banning the strike. A day before the strike the Authority went to the Industrial Court which declared the strike as illegal under Maharashtra Essential Services Act. The Senior Personnel Manager (Welfare) has ordered the striking workers to evict tenements they have been allotted to stay although the Court order had not directed to such action. CITU has protested to this action in a letter to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

CITU also condemned intimidation by some state governments, including the Government of West Bengal and the Government of Tamilnadu, threatening termination of service, service break, 8 days wage cuts etc attacking on the Constitutional, Statutory and Democratic rights of the workers and employees.

Workers Peasants Unity

Kisan Mukti March

Two Days Kisan Mukti March on 29-30 November, 2018 was one of the biggest kisan mobilisations before the Parliament.

It was organised by the largest platform - All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) of more than 200 kisan organisations of the country.

In the two phases of March to the Parliament; in phase one, thousands of Kisans marched from five entry points of Delhi converging to Ramlila Ground on 29 November and stayed overnight.

In phase two, tens of thousands of kisans marched from Ramlila Ground in a colourful procession, with different colours of flags and festoons, reached the Parliament Street and, facing police barricade, it converted into a massive rally and public meeting.

The public meeting was held in two sessions. In the first session, it was addressed by AIKSCC working group members.

In its second session, the meeting was addressed by the topmost national leaders of almost all opposition parties extending their support and committing to the cause of the kisans.

The rally and mass meeting demanded special session of the Parliament to discuss two key Bills - 'Farmers Freedom from Indebtedness Bill, 2018' and the 'Farmers Right to Guaranteed Remunerative Minimum Support Prices for Agricultural Commodities Bill, 2018' - prepared by the AIKSCC and placed as private member bills in the last session of the Parliament by Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana leader Raju Shetti, MP in the Lok Sabha and by CPI(M) MP and AIKS joint secretary K. K. Ragesh in the Rajya Sabha to address to key issues of vast kisan masses – loan waiver and remunerative prices as per the C2+50% formula of Swaminathan Commission.

The meeting adopted the 'Manifesto of Indian Farmers' demanding special session of the Parliament on the two Bills and on 19 point demands to Central government for all sections of agrarian masses.

CITU's leaders at the centre; hundreds of its members from Delhi, Haryana and Punjab joined the Kisan Mukti March. Large number of CITU members and leaders in Delhi with some from Haryana and centre acted as volunteers in different locations during the March and rally.

Several CITU state committees organised solidarity programmes in states.

Several other mass organisations and different sections of the people extended their active support and help during the March, at Ramlila Ground, procession and rally.

Five Kisan Mukti Marches to Ramlila Maidan

29 November

Thousands of kisans and agricultural workers, with the banners and flags of their respective organisations, began Kisan Mukti March on 29 November morning, under the common banner of AIKSCC, from five entry points in Delhi – Nizamuddin, Anand Vihar, Majnu Ka Tila, Brijwasan and Sabji Mandi converging to Ramlila Maidan.

The largest march was from Nizamuddin with the kisans coming from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala. It was led by national leaders of kisan movement including Hannan Mollah, Ashok Dhawale, P. Sainath, Medha Patkar, Sunilam, K. Chandrashekhkar, Vijoo Krishnan, P. Krishna Prasad, K. K. Ragesh, Badal Saroj, Kavita Kuruganti and others. CITU national secretaries A. R. Sindhu and Usharani with Anju Maini from its centre also joined the rally.

The march from Anand Vihar was joined by kisans coming from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. It was led by Rajaram Singh, N. K. Shukla and others kisan leaders. CITU general secretary Tapan Sen walked 16 kms long march to Ramlila Maidan. CITU other leaders from centre – S. Dev Roye, J. S. Majumdar, M. L. Malkotia, R. Karumalaiyan also participated in this March.

The march from Majnu ka Tila was joined by kisans from Himachal Pradesh and Haryana which was led by Rakesh Singha, CPI(M) MLA, Omkar Shaad, Shraddhanand Solanki, Vikram Singh and others. The march from Brijwasan was joined by kisans from Haryana, Delhi, West Bengal, Odisha and some other states. It was led by Yogendra Yadav and Avik Saha. The march from Sabji Mandi was joined by kisans coming from Punjab. It was led by Darshan Pal Singh, Satnam Singh, Ajnala and others.

All five marches reached Ramlila Maidan by evening and rested overnight to join the next lap of the Kisan Mukti March on 30 November.

Kisan Mukti March: Ramlila Ground to Parliament

30 November

The March

On 30 November morning, about 50,000 kisans began their massive second lap of Kisan Mukti March in Delhi from Ramlila Maidan to the Parliament. The rainbow of colours of flags and festoons of different kisan organisations illuminated the March. Entire route of the March and the Parliament Street meeting place were decorated with AIKS and AIAWU flags and buntings and AIKSCC banners.

Poor and middle farmers, tenant farmers, agricultural workers, fishermen and even some rich farmers were part of this rally. Women, Adivasi, Dalit, and Minority kisans were also present in large numbers.

The March was joined by widows and daughters of kisans from Telangana, who had committed suicide due to indebtedness, walking with photographs of their husbands and fathers. Kisans from Tamilnadu came with the skulls and bones symbolizing the kisans distress suicides.

Rally & Meeting

On reaching Parliament Street, the March was stopped at the police barricade where it converted into a rally and public meeting. The first session of the public meeting was addressed by AIKSCC working group members including Raju Shetti, MP, Hannan Mollah, Ashish Mittal, Pratibha Shinde, Atul Kumar Anjan, Rajaram Singh, Medha Patkar, K Chandrashekhar, Sunilam, Ayyakannu, Kiran Vissa, Kavita Kuruganti, Tejinder Singh, Yogendra Yadav and its convener V. M. Singh. The leaders explained agrarian crisis and stressed the need to defeat Modi government. It was also addressed by P. Sainath of *Nation for Farmers* and Maj. Gen. (Retd) Satbir Singh on behalf of the *Indian Ex-Servicemen Movement*.

Hannan Mollah hailed this historic united march and said that consistent peasant struggles, both independent and united, over the last four years had succeeded in bringing agrarian issues to the forefront of the national agenda. He placed all-encompassing 'Manifesto of Indian Farmers' covering all classes connected with agriculture for its adoption. He castigated RSS-BJP for its communal agenda aimed at dividing the people. He called for the defeat of the BJP regime in the coming general elections.

P. Sainath said that the idea of the platform '*Nation for Farmers*' emerged from AIKS-led Nashik to Mumbai Kisan Long March. Doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, techies, employees, workers, literary figures, cultural artistes, students, youth and women have come out in large numbers all over the country to support this Kisan Mukti March in various ways.

Political leaders Supporting Kisans Demands

The second session of the public meeting was addressed by leaders of opposition parties who supported the two key private members Bills - 'Farmers Freedom from Indebtedness Bill, 2018' and 'Farmers Right to Guaranteed Remunerative Minimum Support Prices for Agricultural Commodities Bill, 2018' - placed in the last sessions of Lok Sabha by Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana leader Raju Shetti, MP and of Rajya Sabha by AIKS joint secretary K. K. Ragesh, MP, CPI(M).

Leaders of political parties, who addressed the rally, include CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI general secretary Sudhakar Reddy, CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, Congress president Rahul Gandhi, Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar, National Conference leader and former J & K chief minister Farooq Abdullah, AAP leader and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, Loktantrik Janata Dal leader Sharad Yadav, Samajwadi Party leader Dharmendra Yadav, MP, Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Trilok Tyagi, MP, Telugu Desam Party leader Ravindra Kumar, MP, AAP leader Sanjay Singh, MP and Trinamul Congress leader Dinesh Trivedi, MP. It was conducted by AIKSCC convener V. M. Singh.

All the leaders pledged support to both the Bills and assured that these and other vital farmers' issues would be incorporated in their election manifestos. They severely criticized the Modi-led BJP regime on all counts and called for its resounding defeat.

Sitaram Yechury said that BJP must be defeated in coming elections. But the alternative government must have alternative policies. Changes in policies will only help the farmers and other toiling sections. As the support base is slipping rapidly, the Sangh Parivar has, once again, taken up the issue of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. But, people this time will see through this game. He gave a clarion call for unity and struggle to replace this regime lock, stock and barrel.

Culmination of Series of Struggles

Ashoke Dhawale

This Kisan Mukti March was a powerful culmination of the constantly rising upsurge of peasant struggles after the Modi regime came to power.

In the struggle against the draconian Land Acquisition Ordinance, introduced by the Modi regime, the AIKS took the initiative in 2015 to bring several peasant and social organisations together to form a broad platform called the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan (BAA). After state level agitations and Delhi rallies against the ordinance and with intervention by the Left and other opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha, it had to be withdrawn in August 2015. This was a major victory for the peasantry. The BAA has since taken up several land-related issues against forced land acquisition for the Mumbai-Ahmadabad bullet train, the Salem-Chennai green corridor and the various industrial corridors and freight corridors proposals. It has also taken up issues related to the killing of farmers by cow vigilantes.

AIKS took the independent initiative of organising four nationwide jathas, culminating in an AIKS Delhi rally of several thousand peasants on their burning demands on 24 November 2016. A large Delhi rally was also subsequently held by the AIAWU.

The AIKSCC was formed in June 2017 after the Mandsaur police firing in BJP ruled Madhya Pradesh, which killed six farmers. It took up the two key issues of the vast mass of the peasantry of India today viz. loan waiver and remunerative prices as per the C2 + 50 per cent formula of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) headed by Dr M. S. Swaminathan.

After a countrywide campaign, a massive 2 days Kisan Sansad of tens of thousands of farmers from across the country, and also a novel Mahila Kisan Sansad, was held on Parliament Street in New Delhi on November 20-21, 2017. Two bills for liberation from farm debt and for just remunerative prices were prepared and finalised after holding consultations with farmers in the states. These bills were supported by leaders of 21 opposition parties in a special convention in New Delhi.

The struggles spearheaded by the AIKS in Maharashtra and Rajasthan from 2016 to 2018 contributed greatly in building resistance of the peasantry at all India level. One lakh strong two-days AIKS-led Mahapadav in Nashik in March 2016; 50,000-strong two-days Adivasi Mahagherao at Wada in Palghar district in October 2016; the united 11-day Maharashtra farmers' strike in June 2017; the massive AIKS-led Rajasthan farmers' struggles in September 2017 and February 2018; the remarkable Kisan Long March from Nashik to Mumbai organised by the Maharashtra AIKS in March 2018; and the huge Singur to Kolkata March by the AIKS and AIAWU in West Bengal in November 2018 – all these became sources of inspiration for the entire democratic movement in the country.

The struggles in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Jharkhand and elsewhere succeeded in wresting concessions from the BJP and Congress-led governments in these states. All these struggles also helped to carve out an important space for the AIKS in the united movement.

Running parallel to these peasant struggles were the series of working class struggles led by the CITU and other trade unions throughout the country. They included the two massive all India strikes on 2 September in 2015 and 2016 and huge three-days Mahapadav of lakhs of workers in Parliament Street in New Delhi in November 2017.

On 9 August 2018, well over 5 lakh peasants and workers under the leadership of AIKS, CITU and AIAWU courted arrest at over 610 centres in 407 districts in 23 states across the country. The largest and most militant participation in this struggle was in West Bengal, followed by

Maharashtra and Bihar. This was by far the largest nationwide *Jail Bhari* struggle in the country in recent times. It was a fine example of worker-peasant unity. The peasants and workers of India raised the central slogan “Modi Sarkar, Chale Jao!”

The mammoth 5 September, 2018 *Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally* in Delhi of over 2 lakh workers, peasants and agricultural workers led by CITU, AIKS and AIAWU was another major step forward towards worker-peasant unity in action. It was also another blow under the leadership of the red flag that was aimed at the BJP-RSS-led central government. Working people in huge numbers from across the country participated in this Delhi Rally.

Within three months of this huge action came this Kisan Mukti March on 29-30 November 2018. Preparations are now on for the success of the All India Strike by trade unions on 8-9 January 2019 which will be fully supported in action by the peasantry of India.

With this rising wave of worker-peasant struggles, the stage is being set for the defeat of the BJP-RSS regime in the general elections that are due next year. The stage is also being set for a change in policies in favour of the working people and for the advance of the Left and democratic forces in our country.

(This is a selected portion of an article by Ashoke Dhawale, president of AIKS).

Supportive Actions

During Kisan Mukti March in Delhi on 29-30 November, members of *Nation for Farmers* and CITU workers welcomed the marchers, served them snacks, tea and water, and hundreds of them participated in the marches. They included a large number of students from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, Dr Ambedkar University and Jamia Millia Islamia; workers and middle class employees; cultural activists and professionals like doctors, lawyers, traders, etc. Several volunteers of the *Nation for Farmers*, including a large team of doctors from the AIIMS, rendered round the clock help to the farmers during their stay at Ramlila Maidan. Delhi's APP government led by Arvind Kejriwal made available many facilities for the marchers at the Ramlila Maidan.

CITU's Solidarity Actions

CITU gave call to all its state committees to extend help to the Kisans participating in Kisan Mukti March in Delhi on 29-30 November; organise simultaneous CITU solidarity programmes in States and CITU activists, particularly from Delhi and nearby states, act as volunteers and join the March. Following are some reports received at the CITU all India centre.

In **Kerala**, in solidarity with all India Kisan Mukti March, CITU staged dharnas in front of central government offices in all districts on 29-30 November which were joined by 1200 workers in Thiruvananthapuram; 750 workers in Kollam; 450 in Pathanamthitta; 750 in Alappuzha; 300 in Kottayam; 200 in Idukki; 1750 workers at 3 centres in Ernakulam; 175 in Trissur; 600 in Palakkad; 350 in Malappuram; 800 in Kozhikode; 150 in Wayanad; 650 in Kannur and 300 workers in Kasaragode districts.

In **Maharashtra**, CITU's solidarity programmes with Kisan Mukti March were organised on 29-30 November in 14 districts independently and jointly with other organisations. These include gate meetings at Paithan joined by 150 workers and at Nasik, Sinnar, Shahapur in Nasik district joined by about 800 workers; 2000 workers joined dharna and demonstrations in Solapur city; about 500 workers joined in dharnas and demonstrations at Dadar and Bhandup in Mumbai and about 80 workers joined street corner meeting, dharna and demonstration at Sanvidhan Chowk;

dharna and demonstration at Delhi gate in Ahmad Nagar district; at 6 different places dharna and demonstrations in Jhalna joined by more than 1000 workers; 80 workers joined in dharna and demonstration in Kolhapur city; in Pune city 175 workers joined dharna and demonstration; and memorandum was submitted in Nanded. Reports from other districts are awaited.

In **Bihar**, CITU state committee organised a solidarity rally at Gandhi Maidan in Patna on 30 November joined by CITU unions, AITUC and AICCTU and industrial federations including state government employees, insurance and state coordination committee of trade unions.

In **Jharkhand**, a procession was brought out from CITU office to Albert Ekka Chowk in Ranchi and holding a public meeting on Kisan issues addressed by state leaders of CITU, its unions and federations including M. L. Singh of bank, Naveen Choudhury of state government employees, CITU state general secretary Prakash Viplabi, Anirban Bose of BSSRU, Bhavan Singh HEC, social activist Lalit Murmu and others.

In **Tamilnadu**, on 30 November, solidarity demonstrations were staged, handbills were distributed and posters were pasted at 11 centres in Kanyakumari, Krishnagiri, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, Virudhu Nagar, Villupuram (South) and in Tuticorin districts. Delta district committees could not organise any programme as they were engaged in relief work among the Gaja Cyclone victims and some other districts could not organise the programme due to heavy rains.

In West Bengal

Kisan Long March: Singur to Raj Bhavan

Along with all India Kisan Mukti March, led by West Bengal units of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and All India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU), thousands of farmers and agricultural workers started their two days 52 kms 'Long March' from Tata Motors' abandoned factory at Singur to Raj Bhavan in Kolkata on 28 November. The March was inaugurated by AIKS general secretary Hannan Mollah.

It was at Singur that today's West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee launched her agitation against Tata Motors; and Tata Motors, being welcomed by the then Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, shifted their factory to Sanand in Gujarat; and Narendrabhai Modi became the prime minister of India thereafter.

"Singur farmers can use only a tiny fraction of the 997 acres that was acquired and subsequently returned 2 years ago. But the Trinamool government did not return the plots in cultivable condition. In Singur, farming no longer provides jobs, something the Tata plant could have done. Like other states, farming in Bengal is suffering because of higher input costs and absence of a guaranteed sale price for paddy, jute, potato and vegetables," said AIKS state secretary Amal Halder. (*Newslick*)

The March halted at Bally for overnight stay where participants were accommodated by the local residents. The march resumed on 29 November morning from Bally Ghat, where more Kisans joined. CPI(M) Polit Bureau member and its state secretary Surjya Kanta Mishra joined the March.

The March finally entered Kolkata through Howrah Bridge and held a more than 40,000 strong rally and public meeting at Rani Rasmani Road near Raj Bhavan. The meeting was addressed by Surjya Kanta Mishra, Amal Halder, AIAWU state secretary Amiya Patra and its president Tushar Ghosh.

The March and the rally were for demands including to – set up industries on all acquired lands, including at Singur, and provide jobs to all; stop discriminating Singur's peasants and share croppers in providing government's welfare schemes; 1.5 times MSP on comprehensive cost with

procurement by both, the state and central governments; to waive all agricultural debts; ensure 200 days work @ Rs.350 / day wage in MGNREGA; Rs.6,000 as pension to all above 60 years of age; strong action against corrupt public functionaries in the state and centre.

The March and rally was also in protest against the state government's decision to give 100 acres of fertile land in Haringhata to the e-commerce giant Flipkart ignoring availability of non-fertile land at Raghunathpur in Purulia district.

This March was also to counter BJP president Amit Shah flagging off his party's 'Rath Yatra' on 7 December for communal polarisation in West Bengal. "If Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is serious about fighting BJP, let her prove it by arresting BJP leaders before the Rath Yatra like Laloo Prasad Yadav did in Bihar in 1992," CPI(M) state secretary Suryakanta Mishra said at the rally.

In Solidarity with Workers General Strike & on Kisans Demands 8-9 January Rail Roko, Rasta Roko and Gaon Bandh

Joint meeting of the all India leadership of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU, held on 6 December in Delhi, reviewed the current stage of independent and joint struggles of the working class and peasantry and assessed the need to further advance the struggles in building workers-peasants unity.

AIKS and AIAWU from their respective meetings and joint meetings with other kisan organisations gave clarion call to extend full support to the workers' nationwide general strike on 8-9 January 2019 by organising Rail Roko and Rasta Roko as solidarity actions and simultaneous Gaon Bandh on kisans' demands.

CITU, AIKS and AIAWU gave joint call for holding state and district level joint meetings for coordination, campaign and mobilisation.

Social Disparity

Enrolment in Higher Education

(Central universities, colleges, IITs, IIMs etc)
(2015-16)

<u>Caste</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Population</u>	<u>Percentage of Enrolment</u>
Upper Castes	20.00	28.00
Women	50.00	32.00
OBC	42.00	23.00
SC	16.06	10.00
ST	08.06	03.00
Muslims	14.00	03.00
Disabled	02.02	00.001

(Source: Survey Report by Satish Deshpande and Apoorvanand,
Delhi University, published in Indian Express; 6 December, 2018)

Post General Strike

THE TASK BEFORE US

Tapan Sen

The country has witnessed a massive two days countrywide general strike on 8-9 January 2019 by the working people against the anti-people, anti-worker and anti-national policies of the BJP-led Government of India. The general strike was called by all in the united platform of 10 central trade unions and almost all independent national federations. The strike by the working class had drawn countrywide support and solidarity, with various forms of protest actions, of the people of other walks of lives, the peasantry and agricultural workers in particular.

The general strike and the countrywide peoples' massive response to it, demonstrated people's loud disapproval to BJP government's policy regime of loot, plunder and onslaught on the lives and livelihood of the toiling people at large; on the self-reliance and the national economy as a whole. It also reflected their anger against the poisonous, divisive and repressive machinations on the entire society by the ruling polity.

Culmination of Series of Agitations

The two days countrywide general strike, by the broadest ever united platform of the trade unions of the country and supported by the organizations of all sections of toiling people in the country, marks the convergence and culmination of last three and half years long consistent and continuous agitations and protest actions by the working class and toiling people at large against the same anti-people and anti-national policies of the Narendra Modi government at the centre. There had been agitations including strikes in various sectors at state and national levels. There were also struggles and strikes on common demands led by the central trade unions, jointly and separately.

This period has witnessed two countrywide general strikes, on 2 September in 2015 and in 2016, joined by over 15 crores workers, both from organized and unorganized sector. There had also been numerous agitations and strike actions in various sectors viz. banks, insurance, telecom, coal, steel, road transport, engineering, electricity, various PSUs, defence-production, central and state government employees; in number of multinational companies and in private sector industries. During this period, the workers in various central government schemes particularly by Anganwadi employees, ASHA and mid-day-meal workers etc had been on consistent struggles, both at national and state levels, including indefinite strike action in some states. Construction workers also resorted to number of agitations and also a massive strike at national level. Also notable had been the three days long Mahapadav before the Parliament in November 2017 with participation of at least 2.8 lakh workers in three days.

Number of such strikes, mostly in states, was for indefinite periods compelling the concerned state governments or authority to retreat and concede to the demands of the workers. Due to strike actions, the Government could not yet privatise any of the 10 PSUs including steel plants, BEML, Bridge and Roof, CEL and others which it had planned in 2014 itself.

Widened United Working Class Battle against Neoliberal Regime

The working class movement is the only social force which has been on the path of united struggle with continuity right from the initiation of the pro-imperialist neoliberal policy regime from

1991 itself. Through such struggles and interventions against the neoliberal policy regime the united platform of trade union movement got continuously widened finally drawing all the central trade unions in 2009. This all-in-united platform of trade unions led country wide struggles and agitations from 2009 to 2015, including the two days countrywide general strike in 2013. Joint struggles continued thereafter even though BMS deserted the joint trade union movement on the eve of the general strike in 2015. These struggles in the organised and unorganised sectors tempered and widened the atmosphere of unrest and anger among the people gradually targeting the pro-corporate pro-landlord neoliberal policy regime and its present operator – the BJP led government at the centre.

Change of Governments, But, No Change of Policies

The grievous impact of the neoliberal policy regime on the lives and livelihood of the people - featured in mass scale informalisation and contractorisation of workforce, increasing unemployment and joblosses, rising prices, deliberate non-implementation and non-enforcement of labour laws, attack on labour rights and desperate move for privatization and disinvestment of PSUs and public utility services - has attracted the toiling people at large in the path of organized struggles and agitation both at sectoral level and at national plane.

But the anger and resentment of the people joining the struggles had been mainly against the sufferings and losses that they were being subjected to. It was not generally directed consciously against the policy regime and the politics behind that policy regime. As a result, despite changes in government at the centre number of times since 1991, the direction of the economic policies continued to remain the same, albeit with different intensities. The intervention of the Left forces played crucial role in containing the intensity of the pursuit of neoliberalism at different spells during this period.

Aggressive Neoliberal Regime with Authoritarian, Divisive and Diversionary Agenda

But assumption of power by BJP government at the centre, has brought about a dramatic change in the situation altogether. Not only are the same anti-people and pro-corporate policies being pursued by the BJP government with much more brutal aggressiveness, but these are being supplemented with increasing authoritarian onslaught to stifle opposition to its misrule, trampling underfoot the basic constitutional values and principles. Simultaneously it has resorting to the poisonous divisive strategy, seeking to sharpen communal and other types of polarisation in the society on the basis of caste, creed and various other parochial routes, which is integral to their aim of sustaining the present rule of the exploiting classes that they represent. Through these they seek to divert the attention of the people from the burning issues of their lives and livelihood in the crisis ridden economy and prevent them from becoming the agenda of political discourse. They want to make people fight within themselves on such divisive issues instead of unitedly fighting against the root cause of their miseries and distress.

It is in this background, we should recall CITU conference' call to reach the unreached section of the people to further broaden platform and coverage of the struggles; and for conscious and organized effort to identify by the workers their real enemy through linking issues and problems, faced by them, with the ongoing policy regime and the political operators of such retrograde policy regime bringing miseries and destitution on their lives.

Surging Workers – Peasants Unity and United Struggle

During the span of last three years, along with the united and sustained struggles by the workers, farmers struggles came up in a big way. Their struggle against land acquisition ordinance, for loan waiver and remunerative prices etc exposed the total fraud of the BJP regime before the

people. Upsurge of farmers' struggles in Maharashtra and the long march from Nashik to Mumbai at the initiative of All India Kisan Sabha, farmers struggle in MP and Rajasthan besides in some other states are some of the notable farmers struggles which added momentum to the peoples' movement against Modi-regime.

Concerted and coordinated joint agitations by workers and peasants also marked a beginning during this phase of struggle which, in sequence, include countrywide 9 August, 2018 'Jail Bharo' on farmers demands by AIKS joined by CITU and AIAWU in around 600 location in 394 districts and participated by more than five lakh peasants and workers; Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally before Parliament on 5 September 2018 with above two lakh participation; Kisan Mukti March on 29-30 November 2018 in New Delhi joined by thousands of farmers and others; 30 November workers staging demonstration in most of the state capitals in solidarity with farmers and in support of their demands; and preparatory countrywide campaigns for all these programmes starting in April focusing on reaching the unreached section of the people exposing the anti-people neoliberal regime.

This momentum was seen in the change in qualitative component of the peoples' movement bringing the two main productive forces in the society – the workers and peasants – into joint struggles highlighting the bread and butter issues of the people as a counter to the divisive non-issues by the RSS-BJP bandwagon.

It is precisely in this background that the two days countrywide strike action has drawn the active support of the peasants' organizations through their rural bandh and rail-roko and rasta roko agitation on the strike days.

Positive Indicator in the Defeat

Although at the initial stage, the BJP government's diversionary, divisive and authoritarian strategy met with some success as reflected in the BJP's victories in several assembly elections and BJP gaining power in majority state governments, the situation gradually changed thereafter. In the recent assembly elections, BJP's defeat in the Hindi heartland - Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, its failure to capture power in Karnataka, despite all its dubious efforts, and its defeat in ten Lok Sabha seats that it won in 2014 including in states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh etc where it had state governments; indicates the beginning of such change. Its diversionary and divisive strategy could not meet their expectations. Ram Mandir construction or cow-vigilantism etc could not be made major issues influencing the people in their favour. Instead, severe farmers' distress, unemployment and loss of livelihood, price-rise etc have shaped the opinion of the people facing the elections and that resulted in the rejection of BJP in these states.

No doubt, to some extent this is a positive development. And massive struggles by the toiling people – the workers, farmers, agricultural workers and other section of the people in sequence and with continuity - have made some contribution in this positive development. Of course there were other factors also.

The Main Tasks before Us

The main task is to maintain the continuity and direction of this positive development and mass struggles and mobilizations. Conscious efforts must be made to orient the peoples' consciousness in the right direction in the days to come. Nothing is automatic.

This is the path before us. Mass actions and mobilizations on issues of lives and livelihood of the people is the only path before us to sensitise the people and make them identify their real enemy. That alone can make us advance towards reversal of the policy regime. We have to attack at the root and must not get diverted to fringes. This is the way to counter and defeat the philistine ploy of the capitalist-landlord class and their political agent in the governance to divert peoples' attention from the main issues and divide them towards non-class polarization.

The post strike period must see the continuity of the organized intervention by the working class in coordination of the peasants, agricultural workers and other sections of the people. Workers-peasants joint initiative in action has to be carried forward vigorously and with continuity. The ensuing *19th January Worker Peasant Solidarity Day* must be observed with effective planning, campaign and mobilisation. Major responsibility lies with the working class. Such initiative must percolate down to the lowest tier of organisation to make visible a different correlation as well as combination of struggling forces asserting at the grass root level of the entire society.

This period must be conceived as the beginning of another major political battle - the forthcoming Parliament elections. We must expose both the neoliberal order and its present operator in the governance; not one OR the other. We must work and make people respond to the task of ousting this communal-authoritarian combine from the seat of governance in order to save the people and save the country. The principal task of the class movement must be to orient its intervention to bring forth with force the class issues of life and livelihood and unity of the people as the agenda of the political discourse in the forthcoming political battle and that is the only way to counter effectively the ploy of the ruling class and their political agents to divert the attention and divide the people.

We must and shall overcome!

The New Year of Intensified Struggles

A.K. Padmanabhan

2018 is fading into history and 2019 is ringing. As usual, a new year brings in hope and expectations for the people of India also - 2019 will be a year of hope. The new year, from day one, is going to be days of determination, resistance and hope towards changes for the better.

Before we go into the days of future, let us briefly look into the days which passed away. 5 years ago, in 2014, the same was the situation. 2014 being a year of general election, our 'festival of democracy', as they claim, had also lot of expectations.

At that time at the centre, UPA-II government, failed to curb prices, provide employment and take steps to check corruption. People were angry and had been protesting. They were angry against the policies of the government enriching the corporates at the expenses of the toiling masses. What happened at the general elections is now part of history.

Another general election is knocking at the doors now. What is the situation? What were the promises made by those, who are, for last four and half years, at the helm of affairs? Is there any area where the policies and programmes of the present government has helped the ordinary people – the workers, employees, peasants, agricultural workers, rural artisans, small traders, small entrepreneurs? Is there even one section among the toiling masses that have something to show? There have been lot of things in the air – literally they remained in the air.

What have we been witnessing during this period? Almost all these sections suffered and were forced to come on the streets. There is not a single section among the workers and employees who has not been on struggle – be they Industrial workers, unorganized workers or different categories scheme workers; employees of banks, insurance, telecom, transport, electricity, defense, railways, state government and central government.

There were all out attacks on the workers and employees. Labour laws were amended (more are on the agenda). Social security schemes, including the existing pension schemes, were curtailed. Ministerial assurances to central government, telecom and various other sections of employees proved to be words of deceit; even the recommendations of pay commissions, favourable to employees, were rejected; court orders in favour of workers, coming after decades, are appealed against.

Labour department and enforcement machineries have been put on leash bringing to an end whatever little things they were doing. Everything these departments have been doing is part of the 'reforms' to get the 'ease of doing business' ranking improved.

In the centenary year of the formation of first formal trade union – The Madras Labour Union considered being the first formal trade union in the country formed in April 1918 - the right to form a union of the workers' choice is being denied. Large scale victimizations in the major industrial centres have been taking place just for initiating the formation of a trade union, which are statutorily guaranteed as the right of the workers. Collective bargaining is being denied. Referendums, verifications and secret ballots, which came into existence in certain sectors and departments after long drawn struggles are put on hold, withdrawn or annulled by the government just because the workers are not in favour of the leaders or organizations who are in the good books of the government.

The tripartite machinery, about which, our governments used to boast about, have not been functioning and, whenever held out of compulsion, have become farce. Think of a situation now, where the central trade unions, of course with the exception of the BMS, have been boycotting the tripartite meetings called by the labour ministry. The only reason being that the government does not want to listen to anything the trade unions are suggesting. Even the BMS, has been forced to create records of criticizing many of the government decisions, but by putting the blame on the officers and advisors of the government!

Many state governments, some led by opposition parties, also continue to follow the same path of anti-worker, anti employee policies. The only exception now is the LDF government in Kerala, which continues to follow pro-worker policies and initiatives.

The economic policies and their impacts are not being detailed here. The assets of the country are put on sale. The loot and plunder of the PSUs - including banks, Insurance and others - are continuing. Even the railways, defense establishments and ports are being handed over to corporates.

Overall impact has been that of increasing inequalities. Wage share of workers have been coming down. More and more exploitative innovations are being made in the working conditions. Contract, casual, outsourcing, trainee, apprentice, interns and various new schemes in the name of empowerment and skill development have taken away job security.

The situation is not different in the rural India. Agricultural workers, poor and middle peasants are being looted and exploited cruelly. All the talks about increasing income of peasantry have become futile. The resultant crisis and the struggles of peasantry in many states and at national level have resulted in huge mobilization of peasantry in various struggles and also in the Parliament marches. As seen among the workers, for the last few years, a lot of joint platforms of kisans and social organization working in rural India, are organizing struggles.

On the whole, be it the struggles of workers employees or the peasants; we are witnessing new upsurges. States, which were not witnessing such struggles of peasantry and the workers and employees in the past, have been the arenas of the recent struggles. Kisan struggles in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Haryana, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the recent period have brought out newer sections into the struggle.

We have also witnessed newer sections of workers coming out on struggles. More and more solidarity actions are being seen now. Where the trade unions and other organizations are able to bring out the disastrous policy issues among the masses in a systematic manner, common people have also come out in support of struggles of these sections.

As more and more united struggles are breaking out, some of them spontaneous also; the ruling classes and their organizations are now busy diverting the attention of the masses. On the one side, the communal card is being used to polarize the masses using gods and temples as

symbols to energize their activists; on the other side the governmental machinery is being used to strengthen authoritarian and undemocratic attacks on the masses and also on various institutions.

It is in such a situation, the working people – the workers, employees and the rural toilers - are on the struggle. The Mazdoor-Kisan Sangarsh Rally on 5 September, the women's march on 4 September, the youth rally on employment on 3 November and the Kisan Mukti March on 29 and 30 November were culminations of countrywide campaign on various policy issues. Simultaneously, there were many sectoral, regional and local strikes and struggles in various states.

The election scene in five states were also occasions, at least in certain parts of the states, to raise policy issues that are affecting the toiling masses.

The Two Days Strike in January

While the year 2018 is coming to an end, the whole country is witnessing enthusiastic preparations for a 48 hours countrywide workers general strike on 8-9 January 2019. This strike call in continuation of the 2 strikes on 2 September in 2015 and 2016, 3 days Mahapadav by lakhs of men and women in November 2017 was given by all the central trade union, of course except BMS, and the independent national federations of employees. Many organizations of the struggling people like those of kisans, agricultural workers, women, youth, students and also small traders and entrepreneurs have expressed their solidarity and support to this countrywide strike.

The charter of demands which was adopted at the national level and by various sectoral organizations is aimed at the policies of the government. These policies have been taken to the masses and explained. The general strike demands a change in policies. Working people will carry on these struggles all through the coming year. The period of general election campaign will also be an opportune time to discuss in an extensive manner all these issues with the masses targeting change of government and to ensure change in the policies.

The year 2019 is expected to be a year of intensive class struggle.

Undeclared Emergency, Beginning a Police Raj Government Can Snoop in Your PC, Phones

On 20 December late night, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular authorising 10 central *“security and intelligence agencies for the purposes of interception, monitoring and decryption of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer”*. The circular was issued under Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000.

The intelligence agencies include Intelligence Bureau (IB), Enforcement Directorate (ED), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), National Investigation Agency (NIA), the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the Commissioner of Police, Delhi and others.

Opposition parties - Congress, CPI(M), SP, RJD and TMC – have immediately opposed the government's move describing it as unconstitutional, undemocratic and an assault on fundamental rights. CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury has said, *“Why is every Indian being treated like a criminal? This order by a government wanting to snoop on every citizen is unconstitutional and in breach of the telephone tapping guidelines, the Privacy judgement and Aadhaar judgement.”*

A Political Pool to Manufacture Consent To Anti-Worker Policies of BJP Government

Hemalata

‘CONCENT’, the so called ‘Confederation of Central Trade Unions’, which is set to function from the BMS office, is nothing but a political instrument formed in a desperate attempt to manufacture consent to the anti worker policies of the BJP led government at the centre.

It is yet another attempt to disrupt the unity of the working class and the joint trade union movement, which the BMS deserted and got isolated after BJP, the political wing of the RSS, to which the BMS is affiliated, came to power at the centre in 2014.

The discontent and anger of the working class was reflected in the recent period in the huge participation of workers from all over the country and from all sectors in the joint trade union *Mahapadav* in November 2017 and in the sectoral joint struggles that have been taking place in almost all sectors. Lakhs of workers, peasants and agricultural workers participated in the *Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally* and vociferously demanded reversal of the neoliberal policies pursued by the BJP led Modi government.

Tens of thousands of peasants participated in the *Kisan Mukti March* to the national capital, led by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, comprising over 200 peasant organisations across the country. The preparations for the 2 days’ joint trade union country wide general strike on 8-9 January 2019 are in full swing. The workers are all set to stage another historic general strike against the anti-worker policies, the 18 after the advent of these policies in our country.

It is clear that not only the workers but also all sections of toiling people are angry at their deteriorating conditions. Unemployment, price rise and agrarian distress are major issues troubling the people. They want this BJP government, which has doggedly been pursuing the anti-people policies, to go.

It is in this background that the BMS, affiliated to the RSS of which the BJP is the political arm, wanted to bail out Modi government by creating confusion among the workers. Already such attempts are going on in various sectors. Recently, it formed a so called ‘alliance of non political central trade unions’ by bringing together the breakaway groups and factions of a couple of central trade unions. A meeting of representatives of BMS, NFITU and the breakaway groups of INTUC and TUCC was held at BMS office on 8 December in which this so called confederation was formed. With the incumbent BMS president as chairman, this will function from the BMS office. They will draft a charter of demands, hold a ‘national conclave’ on 31 December and present the demands to the ‘group of ministers’ immediately for negotiations. Thus, this platform is claimed to give ‘solutions to the issues related to all Indian workers.

It is to be recalled that BMS was part of the joint trade union movement which included all the central trade unions since 2009. It was a party in drafting the common charter of demands of the joint trade union movement. It was part of the joint national conventions of workers held between 2009 and 2015 which gave unanimous calls for campaigns and struggles including jail bhara programmes and strikes. It participated in the two days’ strike in February 2013.

It had no problem in joining the joint trade union movement and participating in the struggles on common demands as long as the Congress led UPA government was in power. But, its discomfiture started when the BJP led government came to power in 2014. Even when it became clear that the BJP led Modi government was pursuing the same anti-worker policies as that of the Congress led UPA government; it tried to postpone the joint calls against these policies by the central trade unions.

Though it participated in the joint national convention of workers in May 2015, it backstabbed the joint trade union movement and withdrew from the countrywide general strike on 2 September 2015. This was done just a few days before the strike, after discussions with the 'group of ministers'. Even when the government made no concrete assurance on any of the demands and all the other central trade unions decided to go on strike as decided earlier, the BMS announced that the 'government was positive to the demands of trade unions' and withdrew from the strike. Since then it has deserted the joint trade union movement.

Obviously, this was under instructions of its 'political bosses'. Only two demands were added since then related to the amendments to the labour laws and FDI in key sectors including railways and insurance, as the BJP led government was more aggressively pursuing these as part of its neoliberal agenda.

Before the countrywide general strike on 2 September 2016, the same 'group of ministers' constituted by the BJP government invited the BMS, which had not given any call for the strike, and staged a show of having discussions. The government did not call the other central trade unions, which called for the strike, for discussions.

Of course, the working class of the country gave a fitting reply to its deceptive ploys, by rejecting its arguments. Both the strikes saw unprecedented participation of workers. In several states even the workers belonging to the BMS unions joined the strikes.

It is to be noted that BMS has now again resorting to a similar exercise of submitting a charter of demands to the same group of ministers when the working class of the country is in the midst of serious preparations for the two days' strike against the arrogance of the BJP government in pursuing the policies detrimental to the interests not only of the workers but also of all sections of common people and against the interests of the nation.

People of the country today are not only angry against the neoliberal policies of the BJP government, they are also disgusted with its open support to the communal agenda of the RSS and the damage it is doing to the secular fabric of our society and harmonious co existence of people belonging to different religions, castes, languages, cultures etc. They are restless against the growing authoritarian tendencies and its attempts to suppress all resistance and opposition. It is significant that the slogan repeatedly heard in the peasants rally was '*Ayodhya nahin, karz mafi chahiye*'.

The poor peasants, unable to sell their old cows and forced to feed them spending at least Rs.3000 per month per cow, are facing the brunt of the affect of 'gau raksha' imposed by 'gau rakshak' gangs.

In the wake of such growing discontent, the RSS obviously felt it necessary to buttress its communal divisive machinations with such dubious exercises to divide the workers, disrupt their unity and weaken the intensifying struggles against neoliberal policies of the BJP led government.

But the RSS promoted ill designed "CONCENT" to confuse working people and disrupt the united movement must not and will not succeed. The working class will surely defeat all such machinations by yet another unprecedented country wide general strike on 8-9 January 2019.

Seminar at P.R. Bhawan



After inaugural programme, it was the first organised programme at P. R. Bhavan, CITU's education and research centre in Delhi, on 5 December holding a seminar attended by all CITU leaders at the centre, the presidents and secretaries of Delhi and neighbouring states and national leaders of federations in the national capital region.

The seminar was the occasion to felicitate CITU veteran leader Kanai Banerjee, who worked at CITU centre at BTR Bhavan in New Delhi for long 30 years as one of its national secretaries, and his contribution of lifetime collection of books to P. R. Bhavan library.

CITU general secretary Tapan Sen introduced the occasion, subjects and speakers of the seminar. CITU president Hemalata felicitated Kanai Banerjee and presided. Kanai Banerjee responded by saying that a dream has come true through his contribution in the P. R. Bhavan library.

First subject of the seminar was 'Contemporary Capitalism and the Role of Working Class'. Prof. Prabhat Pattnaik was the speaker. This was followed by question answer session. Post launch session of the seminar was on 'Impact of Neoliberalism Change in Employment Profile in India: Challenges and Opportunities' was presented by JNU Professor of Economics Surajit Majumdar. This was also followed by question and answer session.

CITU centre decided to publish the presentation on both the subjects with questions and answers for their educative value among CITU cadres. (*Inputs: Amitava Guha*)

STATES

West Bengal

Anganwadi Employees Demonstration in Kolkata



CITU affiliated Paschimbanga Rajya ICDS Karmi Samity, after 7 days long extensive campaign in the districts, organised a massive 10,000 strong Anganwadi employees procession and staged dharna, demonstration and held public meetings when stopped at police barricade at Dharmatala Street, near Raj Bhavan, in Kolkata on 12 November. A 7 member's delegation went to Governor's office and submitted memoranda addressed to the chief minister, finance and WCD ministers demanding implementation of chief minister's 21 May 2018 announcement of additional increase of Rs.1000 in remuneration to each of the Anganwadi workers and helpers by the state government beginning with October remuneration. However, on 1 November another order was issued by the government stating that the increase would be Rs.400 to Helpers and Rs.700 to the Workers.

Immediately, statewide protest was launched through deputation submitting memoranda to the CDPO in all projects. The state rally in Kolkata was culmination of these protests. The union decided to further intensify the agitation.

Tamilnadu

83 Days Strike in MSI Ends in Agreement

83 days long strike by 1100 workers, including 149 permanent workers, in autoparts maker Myong Shin Automotive India Ltd (MSI), which began on 6 September (*The Working Class; November, 2018*), ended with a tripartite agreement on 27 November, 2018.

By this agreement, management revoked suspension of 12 workers, who are the leading activists of the CITU affiliated union; dispute concerning alleged misconduct by 22 workers and management's penal actions were referred to DLC, but would not lead to termination of their service; and that the industrial tribunal award on wage revision would be implemented by the management in letter and spirit. The tripartite meeting was attended by CITU state president A. Soundararajan and its Kanchipuram district president E. Muthukumar and secretary S. Kannan.

Strike and Agitation Sweeping France

Countrywide strikes and agitation by all toiling sections are sweeping France since mid November against President Macron's aggressive drive of neoliberal reforms attacking people's jobs and livelihood, taxation and price rise.

In solidarity with the popular 'Yellow Vests' movement at each week-end, beginning on 17 November called as 'Act-I'; French workers have gone on nationwide strikes on 14 and 18 December at the call of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT). Other unions - FSU, Solidaires, SUD and UNEF - have also joined the movement. The strikes are for "immediate increase in salaries, pensions and social protection;" and against job cuts in permanent category and against early retirement.

Macron's labour reforms putting restriction on strike, collective bargaining and favouring 'hire and fire' policies were adopted in October, 2018 despite protests.

The strikes took place across several industries including air traffic control, transport, education. Air travel in entire Europe was affected when air-traffic controllers remained on strike on 14-15 December. Controllers union USAC-CGT said "We have suffered continual downsizing for more than 10 years." Rail workers are on 48 hours rolling strikes in each week until 28 June, 2019 unless Macron backs down on his bid to overhaul state rail, SNCF. Air France staff, garbage collectors and energy workers along with train drivers resorted to strike. Unionised teachers, assistants and even the students were called to join the strike.

French lawyers burned legal codes as part of a nation-wide strike against planned justice reform law.

Students are protesting against planned changes to impose stricter entrance procedures at public universities. Students at two universities in Paris and Lyon blocked faculty buildings. Sit-ins at universities from Paris to Bordeaux and Nantes have disrupted classes for weeks. Two universities in Montpellier and Toulouse are entirely shut. Movement has spread in Sorbonne University and in Lumiere Lyon 2.

In Marseille, hundreds of demonstrators from different walks of life - retired dockers, postmen, students - staged protest in defense of public services which Macron is seeking to dismantle. "They are attacking the rail workers before moving on to other public sector workers," said a CGT union leader.

Facing protest, President Macron backed down and announced minimum wage rise by •100 effective January, 2019 (but, will be paid by the government and not by the employers), tax cuts for low income pensioners, tax free overtime pay and yearend bonus.

The CGT has criticised Macron's measures saying that nothing is changed in respect of "austerity"; the minimum wage isn't a minimum wage; income tax relief is only to a section of pensioners and there is freeze on pensions. The strikers are demanding •1,800 as minimum wage.

President Macron has vowed to reshape France with far-reaching neoliberal reforms combined with austerity drive for the people. The administration declared a state of economic and social emergency.

The police have been cracking down on the protesters using tear gas and water cannon. Nationwide more than 260 people were wounded and at least three died outside Paris and more than 400 people were arrested in Paris.

Yellow Vest Movement

(*Gilets Jaunes* in French)

The movement originated in May, 2018 when a woman, Priscillia Ludosky, launched an internet petition for reduction of petroleum prices. Breaking the price components she showed that taxes made up more than half the cost.

In October, Éric Drouet, a truck driver, circulated Priscillia's petition in Facebook. Newspapers began writing about it and the number of signatures jumped from an initial 700 to 200,000 and increased to millions now. Drouet decided to hold a car rally cum protest on 17 November to demand lower gas prices. Words spread on social media. Soon, autonomous groups formed in different parts of the country who decided to hold their own protests.

People, who agreed with the petition, displayed the high-visibility yellow vest, which every driver in France by law must carry for use in case of roadside trouble, to show their support.

17 November week-end Yellow Vest protest was called as Act-I. Protests are taking place every weekend since then and thus serially named. 15 December protest was Act-IV. As the protests rolled on, they added newer demands and issues.

CITU's Sectoral National Coordination Committees

As was decided in CITU Kozhikode GCM, national coordination committees of sectoral unions have been / are being formed after holding sectoral unions meetings and approved by CITU secretariat as follows:

National Coordination Committee of Cement Workers' Unions: was formed with Nishith Chowdhury as convenor, Kashmir Singh Thakur and Pramod Pradhan as co-conveners.

National Coordination Committee of Distilleries and Breweries' Workers' Unions: was formed with Udhav Bhawalkar as its convener.

National Coordination Committee of Automobile Manufacturing Workers Unions: was formed with Vinod Kumar of Chennai as its convener.

National Coordination Committee of IT/ITES Unions: will be formed in an all India convention of not less than 300 IT/IT employees shortly.

Regional Coordination Committee of Handloom Workers' Unions: in South India will be constituted shortly.

National Coordination Committee of Autoparts Manufacturing Workers Unions: Efforts will be made for holding an all India meeting of such unions and form their national coordination committee.

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

State	Centre	Sept 2018	Oct 2018	State	Centre	Sept 2018	Oct 2018
AP	GUNTUR	282	283	MHR	MUMBAI	295	298
	VIJAYWADA	285	286		NAGPUR	366	361
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	291	291		NASIK	336	340
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	271	272		PUNE	317	320
	GUWAHATI	261	263		SHOLAPUR	313	310
	LABAC SILCHAR	264	266	ORI	ANGULTALCHER	319	320
	MARIANI JORHAT	253	257		ROURKELA	311	312
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	251	252	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	302	306
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	320	331	PUN	AMRITSAR	321	322
CHD	CHANDIGARH	304	304		JALANDHAR	303	303
CHS	BHILAI	324	324		LUDHIANA	287	289
DLI	DELHI	287	287	RIN	AJMER	280	280
GOA	GOA	325	323		BHILWARA	280	281
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	276	279		JAIPUR	291	291
	BHAVNAGAR	292	292	TN	CHENNAI	271	269
	RAJKOT	289	290		COIMBATORE	275	280
	SURAT	265	270		COONOR	314	314
	VADODARA	272	273		MADURAI	281	281
HRV	FARIDABAD	273	271		SALEM	282	283
	YAMUNANAGAR	287	290		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	293	295
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	266	267	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	311	311
J&K	SRINAGAR	271	273		HYDERABAD	253	254
JRK	BOKARO	293	296		WARRANGAL	309	310
	GIRIDIH	329	330	TRP	TRIPURA	265	266
	JAMSHEDPUR	345	349	UP	AGRA	347	349
	JHARIA	346	346		GHAZIABAD	319	324
	KODARMA	365	365		KANPUR	325	328
	RANCHI HATIA	366	368		LUCKNOW	321	321
KNT	BELGAUM	298	299		VARANASI	317	315
	BENGLURU	290	291	WB	ASANSOL	326	326
	HUBLI DHARWAR	318	318		DARJEELING	276	276
	MERCARA	305	305		DURGAPUR	320	323
	MYSORE	305	306		HALDIA	332	333
KRL	ERNAKULAM	305	307		HOWRAH	285	287
	MUNDAKKAYAM	304	304		JALPAIGURI	281	277
	QUILON	342	345		KOLKATA	283	285
MP	BHOPAL	313	314		RANIGANJ	280	280
	CHHINDWARA	296	294		SILIGURI	273	273
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	JABALPUR	309	310				
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West Bengal Kisan Long March

28-29 November, 2018

(Report Page 12)

Singur to Kolkata



(left) March from Singur snaking its way; (right) Rally and public meeting in Kolkata

(Photos: Courtesy Ganashakti)

CITU's Solidarity with Kisan Mukti March

29-30 November, 2018

(Report Page 11)



Jharkhand



Bihar



Karnataka



Kerala

Kisan Mukti March

Delhi, 29-30 November, 2018

(Report Page 10)



CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen in the Kisan Mukti March from Anand Vihar



Two views – From Ramlila Ground to Parliament Street



(left) Opposition Leaders expressing solidarity with Kisan movement;
(right) Sitaram Yechruri with firebrand young leaders - Dalit leader Jignesh Mevani, MLA (Gujarat) and former JNUSU leader Kanhaiya Kumar