



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



CITU Extends May Day Greetings to all its Readers

Vizag Steel March

The Flow of Red

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National Convention of CPSU Unions

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Dharna before Odisha Assembly

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WORKING CLASS**MAY 2018
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Democracy and Rights**

Central trade unions and federations jointly staged demonstration in front of West Bengal state election commissioner's office protesting against notification fixing, in connivance with TMC-led state government, 1 May as a date of panchayat poll; and demanded rescheduling poll dates keeping out 1 May being the International Working Class Day. The trade unions also jointly approached high court on this issue.

CITU centre has supported the joint trade unions demands of rescheduling poll date; condemned the state government for attacking on the workers right of May Day and for patronizing TMC goons in perpetrating violence and rigging panchayat election. These developments in West Bengal in respect of panchayat election are attacks on workers' hard earned rights and on people's democratic rights.

It was the Left Front government in West Bengal who laid the model of grass root democracy through three tier panchayat system. It is this model which has been incorporated in the Constitution of India by its 73rd Amendment in 1992 as 'Panchayats' in separate Part IX and its Schedule with 29 subjects followed by 74th amendment for Municipalities. Even Supreme Court highlighted this stating that Indian democracy stands on three legs – Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and Gram Sabha. Significance of Left's contribution in extending grass root democracy in Indian polity with far reaching impact must not be losing sight of. Despite many shortcomings and distortions in its implementation, it created churning among the socially and economically marginalized sections reflection of which we are observing in countrywide protests of these sections.

That Left's model of panchayats expanding grass root democracy is under attack in West Bengal by an authoritarian regime using the state power subverting the democratic process in panchayat election, lumpenisation and attempting subjugation of marginalized and oppressed sections. The same attitude is reflected in suppressing the right of the working class to observe May Day as the day to recall the world over struggle of the working class and of the people for their emancipation.

Though panchayat elections are held under respective state's law, its conduct has the same force as that under Representation of People's Act for Lok Sabha and state legislatures. Section 135(B) of the Act says that every person employed shall be granted a paid holiday on the day of poll. On the other side workers are granted paid holiday on 1 May to observe May Day under Negotiable Instruments Act. Both are rights of paid holidays by law. You cannot replace one by the other, nor can you give compensatory leave. It is not only the question of leave; it is the event for which the paid holiday is granted.

CITU Foundation Day Pledge

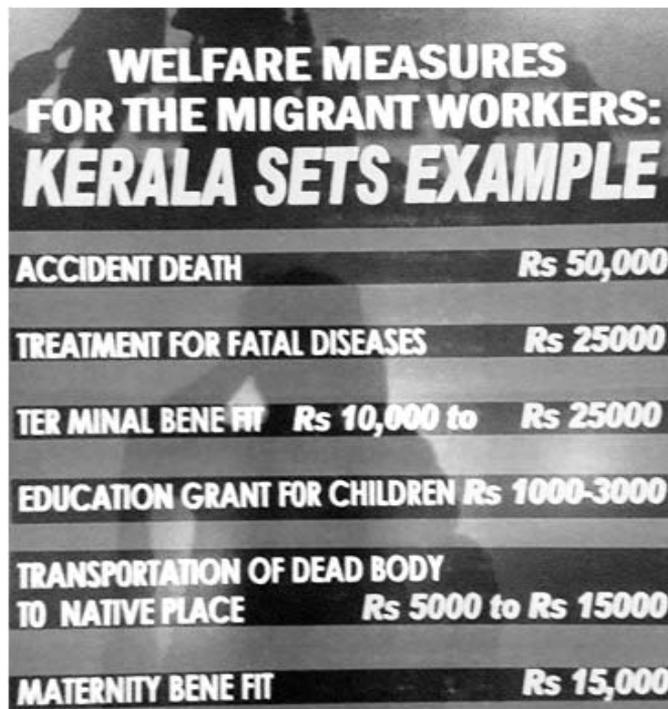
30 May, 2018

On this 48th Foundation Day of CITU;

- We rededicate ourselves to continue the fight on the demands of the workers, to defend their hard won rights from the neoliberal onslaught and improve their working and living conditions, with enhanced vigour;
- We pledge to strengthen CITU to achieve its constitutional objective of an exploitation free society, for a decent and dignified life for all toiling people;
- We pledge to unite the entire working class irrespective of religion, caste, region or gender in the struggle to realise this goal;
- We pledge to strengthen and broaden the struggle for resisting the ongoing onslaughts on rights of the working people and trade union rights;
- We affirm our determination to resist and defeat any attempts to divide the toiling people on any pretext, disrupt their unity and weaken the struggle of workers to improve their conditions.

UNITE and FIGHT for A BETTER FUTURE

Kerala LDF's Alternative Policy - A Milestone



WELFARE MEASURES FOR THE MIGRANT WORKERS: KERALA SETS EXAMPLE	
ACCIDENT DEATH	Rs 50,000
TREATMENT FOR FATAL DISEASES	Rs 25000
TERMINAL BENE FIT	Rs 10,000 to Rs 25000
EDUCATION GRANT FOR CHILDREN	Rs 1000-3000
TRANSPORTATION OF DEAD BODY TO NATIVE PLACE	Rs 5000 to Rs 15000
MATERNITY BENE FIT	Rs 15,000

Centre of Indian Trade Unions

MAY DAY MANIFESTO, 2018

On this May Day, the Day of International Solidarity of the Working Class;

CITU -

- Greets all working people, be they working in factories, offices, services, mines, forests, fields or waters, across the world;
- Expresses solidarity to all their struggles to protect their hard won rights, to improve their conditions, to defeat the attacks of imperialists-led, international finance driven neoliberal capitalist order on their lives and livelihoods, particularly in the wake of its systemic crisis globally and emancipate themselves from all exploitation;
- Affirms its commitment to socialism and its resolve to continue its struggle for a society free from exploitation by one human being by another; Stands in solidarity with the people of the socialist countries in their efforts to defend socialism in their countries;
- Defends the right of the people in all countries to democratically choose their governments without any external interference; Condemns imperialist interventions and wars in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Iraq etc and their hegemonic machinations to undermine the Left and Progressive governments in Latin America and other parts of the world; Commits to fight imperialism with all its might; Asserts that the fight against imperialism is an integral part of the class struggle against exploitation;
- Reiterates its solidarity with the heroic struggle of Palestinians for their home land; Demands recognition of independent sovereign state of Palestine with 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital

CITU -

- Notes with utmost concern the increasing inequalities under neoliberalism with the richest 1% cornering more than half of global wealth produced by the sweat and blood of the toiling masses; this wealth is amassed by increasing exploitation of the working people, cronyism, evading taxes and grabbing public properties and natural resources – land, forests, mines, waters – displacing poor peasants, adivasis and others;
- Raises its consternation at the rise of the right wing forces, which offer no alternative to neoliberalism but seek to divide the working class and toiling people on the basis of nationalities, religion, region, race, caste, gender and other ways in many parts of the world; this phenomenon is more visible in countries where the so called social democratic and Left-leaning forces betrayed the working class by supporting neoliberal policies; Affirms that these right wing forces promoted by international finance and imperialism serve the interests of big corporates and business houses by disrupting unity of the toiling people through various means and weaken their struggle against neoliberalism; Pronounces them the enemies of the toiling people;
- Asserts that, in the present context, it has become imperative for capitalism, at its present state of continuously deepening crisis to promote right wing, authoritarian and barbaric forces to protect the profits of the capitalists and sustain itself in the face of the present systemic crisis; the absence of a strong socialist block has emboldened it;
- Expresses outrage that in the present capitalist system, the huge advances in science and technology, made with the active involvement of the people are used, not for their benefit, but to

enrich a few developed countries, big corporates and business houses that seize ownership of these;

- Holds the capitalist system responsible for the prevalence and aggravation of unemployment, poverty, destitution, illiteracy, ill health, lack of housing and other basic necessities for the vast majority of people despite all the necessary resources to eliminate these being available today;
- Pledges to raise awareness among the working class about inherent exploitative nature of the capitalist system, which got fiercer, atrocious and barbaric in the background of ongoing aggravation of the crisis; Pledges to heighten the consciousness of the workers on the role of the working class in uprooting the capitalist system and to prepare it for the ultimate struggle to end all exploitation;
- Pronounces its determination to strengthen the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in its efforts to unite the working class across the globe and strengthen the struggle against the exploitative capitalist system with more determined class orientation

On this May Day, CITU -

- Expresses serious alarm at the three pronged attacks on the working people of the country – the continuing neoliberal attacks on the working and living conditions of the people in our country by the BJP regime, the growing influence of divisive communal and casteist forces with the RSS trying to exert its authority over almost all the institutions of the government and various social institutions and rising authoritarianism; there is growing intolerance in society; people promoting rational and scientific thought are being physically attacked and killed; any dissent and opposition to the policies, views and ideology of the BJP is branded as ‘anti national’ and being sought to be suppressed through physical attacks, abuse and threats;
- Records serious concern over the phenomenon of rising unemployment, joblessness and deepening gloom in industrial economy, over increasing impoverishment, agrarian crisis, rural distress and continuing farmers’ suicides, and the obscene widening of inequalities under the neoliberal order;
- Highlights the glaring irony as well as hypocrisy of a government, acting totally against the national interests by handing over the nation’s wealth – lands, forests, water bodies, mines and public sector undertakings including those in the strategic sector, to foreign corporations through 100% FDI, talking of ‘nationalism’; the government which compromises national interests and sacrifices independent foreign policy by becoming a junior strategic partner of US imperialism claims to be upholding national pride;
- Denounces the continuing onslaught on labour rights in the name of labour reforms to facilitate promote the “ease of doing business”, rather “ease of looting the people and the nation” with the ultimate aim of weakening and demolishing trade unions, the organised force of the working class; reiterates its firm commitment to resist imposition of slavery on the working people and stoutly defend their rights;
- Condemns the attacks by BJP goons on the offices and cadres of Left parties and CITU in Tripura after the BJP came to power in the state; statues of Lenin were demolished; Demands that these attacks be stopped immediately;
- Salutes and expresses solidarity with the working class and people of Tripura who are bravely resisting these attacks; expresses confidence that the people of Tripura will soon overcome these attacks;
- Strongly denounces the continuing attacks on the cadres of Left and CITU by the Trinamool goons in West Bengal, particularly in the wake of the Panchayat elections; Condemns its decision to hold the Panchayat elections on the May Day bulldozing all oppositions by the entire working class and democratic movement; Left cadres and leaders are being physically attacked and prevented from filing their nominations for the ensuing elections to the Panchayats in the state; Extends solidarity to the people resisting these heinous attacks;

- Expresses anger at the growing attacks on the dalits and minorities in various parts of the country, particularly in the BJP ruled states; the ideological commitment of the BJP and RSS to the retrograde and hierarchical *manusmriti* that seeks to suppress dalits, adivasis and women encourages such attacks; while continuing its commitment to *manusmriti*, the BJP is seeking to hoodwink and woo dalits only for their electoral gains;
- Welcomes the growing struggles by different sections of people – workers, peasants, dalits, students etc to assert their constitutional and democratic rights and resist attacks on their lives and livelihoods

On this May Day, CITU -

- ❖ Reiterates its conviction that the challenges confronting the working class and the toiling people in the country today necessitate three pronged struggle – the struggle against neoliberalism, against divisive communal and casteist forces and against authoritarianism;
- ❖ Proclaims its determination to mobilise the entire working class in the country to effectively face these challenges;
- ❖ Reiterates its strong determination to strengthen and widen the unity of all sections of toiling people in the platform of united struggle; this is the prerequisite for heightening the struggle for resistance to the anti-people socio-economic-political regime;
- ❖ Affirms its belief that that majority and minority communalism and fundamentalism thrive on each other; communalisms of whatever colours and flags divide people, disrupt their unity, divert their attention from real day to day issues, weaken their struggle against the real culprit – the neoliberal policies and the exploitative system; ultimately communalism serves the exploiting classes;
- ❖ Stresses the need for unity of the workers, poor peasants and agricultural workers to fight the neoliberal order and the capitalist system that subjects all of them to intense exploitation and resolve to work in that direction;
- ❖ Is determined to take up independent campaigns, initiatives to strengthen the joint trade union movement as well as united struggles of all toiling masses by placing concrete alternative policies to neoliberalism in order to achieve widest possible mobilisation of the toiling masses;
- ❖ Reiterates its belief that development of such massive struggles alone can lead to a comprehensive change in the correlation of class forces in favour of the working class.

On this May Day 2017, CITU appeals to the working class of India to -

- ✓ Strengthen unity and intensify the struggle to defeat neoliberal policies and for alternative pro worker pro people policies;
- ✓ Remain vigilant and defeat the machinations of communal and casteist forces to disrupt unity;
- ✓ Deepen bonds of solidarity among all sections of toiling people – workers, agricultural workers, poor peasants etc;
- ✓ Identify the real enemy of the working class and all sections of toiling people – the capitalist system and the politics and forces that promote the system; prepare for the struggle to change this exploitative system.

On this May Day, CITU raises its banner in support of International Working Class Solidarity and Unity Against all Exploitation and Oppression.

❖ Down With Capitalism and Imperialism !

❖ Long Live Socialism !!

❖ Workers of the World Unite !!!

WFTU on May Day 2018

May Day 2018: With Internationalism and Solidarity

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in the name of its more than 92 million affiliates all over the world salutes, on the occasion of this great day, all the workers who live, work and struggle in every corner of the world. May Day was, is and will be a beacon for the struggles of yesterday and tomorrow despite our enemies' efforts. May Day has to be a message of resistance against bourgeoisie, imperialists and their international alliances' policies.

At the same time, the workers' blood which was shed in Chicago on 1886 reminds us of our duty today; it reminds us that nothing is given for free; every right or freedom that was conquered by our class has been won through sacrifices, conflicts and organized struggles.

Today, whilst technology and scientific progress have contributed to the increase of the produced social wealth, our class' living conditions have been deteriorating. In every capitalist country, the bosses attack our class achievements: they are sweeping through salaries, pensions and social security; they are privatizing everything, they don't hesitate to attack even the sacred right to strike! Strike is the most powerful weapon we have in our hands and we are not going to allow anyone to limit, confine or convert it to a dead letter!

At the same time, they are intensively preparing and conducting regional wars. They pave the way for new massacres that will maximize their profits, for new imperialist interventions that will destroy nations, spill peoples' blood and deprive them of their natural resources. The ongoing imperialist intervention in Libya and Syria, the growing aggression against Venezuela, the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the massacre of Saudi Arabia against Yemen, the tension on the Korean peninsula, they are all indications that multinationals have smelled new profitability areas; and every time this goes through the dead bodies of workers.

Under the current conditions of the deep economic crisis of capitalism and intense competition among various imperialist centers to control new markets, our most powerful weapons are INTERNATIONALISM and SOLIDARITY. No worker must feel alone. All together, we must move on with Solidarity and Internationalism, building the Unity of the working class to give practical effect to Karl Marx's motto "proletarians of all countries unite".

In this context, and on this anniversary, the WFTU expresses its solidarity with our persecuted brothers, the immigrants and refugees, who either because of imperialists' bullets or because of poverty and misery generated by this system, are forced to leave their homeland. The WFTU will continue to be on their side, fighting for a world without exploitation and refugees. Immigrants must become an integral part of unions, unite with local workers and fight together for wages, rights, against wars and interventions.

We join our voice with the heroic Palestinian people in order to gain their own independent and democratic homeland.

At the same time, we stand by the side of the struggling female worker, the one who suffers from double exploitation. The WFTU female members, at the recent World Women's Congress in Panama, declared loud and clear that they want equal rights to work, society and life. The WFTU also fights and will continue to fight for this equality. It's the same orientation that we follow for the the youngsters, as the new generation of workers have the task to honor the best May Day struggle traditions.

This year, the WFTU, by giving its hand to anyone who has stood up, has announced the year of trade union education and training. Our purpose is that the new shifts of workers be insubordinate, militant, enemies of class compromise and collaboration. We honor the year of trade union training and we call on every union to contribute to the militant truth, revealing the true meaning of May Day and the sacrifices the working class made for it. By rescuing the past, the very memory of our movement, we leave a legacy for tomorrow's struggles and we also have a tool for the future. It is a duty to know the history of our movement.

When the WFTU takes steps forward, strengthens and grows: and that's what frightens our opponents. There is no other way than to make it present everywhere, in every corner of the world, so that there is no longer a hungry, dismissed, hunted or persecuted worker. The WFTU must be a "trench" of struggle for a future without exploitation of man by man. This is how the vision of the first Secretary General of the WFTU, Luis Saillant, envisioned in 1945 will be brought to life: "The WFTU for the workers of the whole world!"

LONG LIVE MAY DAY!

Karnataka **BSNL Contract Workers Dharna**



In response to the all India call of BSNL contract workers federation BSNLCCWF, more than one thousand BSNL contract workers of Karnataka under the banner of BSNL NPWU (CITU) staged a state level dharna before the chief general manager's (CGM) office in Bengaluru on 15 March. They came from all districts of Karnataka Circle.

The agitation was in pursuance demands opposing retrenchment in the name of non availability of fund, nonpayment of minimum wage as per central government's orders, to ensure salary payment before 7th of every month, payment of bonus, issue of ID cards, proper recovery and remittance of EPF amount to the PF authorities, payment of compensation amount to the family of a worker who died while on duty, proper supply of working materials and opposing establishment of tower company etc. The dharna was inaugurated by BSNLCCWF V.A.N. Namboodiri and was addressed by its general secretary Animesh Mitra, leaders of BSNLEU, CITU and BSNL NPWU.

A delegation met the CGM and other officials, submitted memorandum on demands and held discussion. CGM responded positively to the demands and assured to take up with the corporate office with his recommendations. On behalf of the management, GM HR and GM CFA met the workers at dharna place, explained management's position and on the discussion held with the delegation. (Inputs: Gundanna C K)

Labour & Parliamentary Democracy

[Extract from B.R.Ambedkar's Speech; 17 September 1943]

[14 April happens to be the birth day of B. R. Ambedkar. On this occasion, we are publishing extracts from Ambedkar's speech delivered on the conclusion of a trade union workers study camp on 17 September 1943.]

Social and economic democracy is the tissues and the fiber of a Political Democracy....Parliamentary Democracy developed a passion for liberty. It never made even a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realize the significance of equality, and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between Liberty and Equality, with the result that liberty swallowed equality and has left a progeny of inequities.

All political societies get divided into two classes—the Rulers and the Ruled....But the unfortunate part of it is that the division becomes stereotyped and stratified so much so that the Rulers are always drawn from the Ruling Class and the class of the Ruled never becomes the Ruling class. People do not govern themselves, they establish a government and leave it to govern them, forgetting that is not their government.

Parliamentary Democracy has never been a government of the people or by the people, and that is why it has never been a government for the people. Parliamentary Democracy, notwithstanding the paraphernalia of a popular government, is in reality a government of a hereditary subject class by a hereditary ruling class. It is this vicious organization of political life which has made Parliamentary Democracy such a dismal failure. It is because of this that Parliamentary Democracy has not fulfilled the hope it held out the common man of ensuring to him liberty, property and pursuit of happiness.

The question is who is responsible for this? There is no doubt that if Parliamentary Democracy has failed to benefit the poor, the labouring and the down trodden classes, it is these classes who are primarily responsible for it. In the first place, they have shown a most appalling indifference to the effect of the economic factor in the making of men's life.

Marx propounded the doctrine of the Economic interpretation of History. ... If the doctrine of Economic interpretation of History is not wholly true it is because the labouring class as a whole has failed to give economic facts the imperative force they have in determining the terms of associated life. The Labouring classes have failed to acquaint itself with literature dealing with the government of mankind. Everyone from the Labouring Classes should be acquainted with Rousseau's Social contract, Marx's Communist Manifesto, Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical on the conditions of Labour and John Stuart Mill on Liberty, to mention only four of the basic programmatic documents on social and governmental organization of modern times. But the labouring classes will not give them the attention they deserve. Instead labour has taken delight reading false and fabulous stories of ancient kings and queens and has become addicted to it.

There is another and a bigger crime which they have committed against themselves. They have developed no ambition to capture government, and are not even convinced of the necessity of controlling government as a necessary means of safeguarding their interests. Indeed, they are not even interested in government. Of all the tragedies which have beset mankind, this is the biggest and the most lamentable one.

Trade Unions, even if they are powerful, are not strong enough to compel capitalists to run capitalism better. Trade Unions would be much more effective if they had behind them a Labour Government to rely on. Control of Government must be the target for Labour to aim at.

The working classes who are beggared in every way and who have very little to spare, often sacrifice their all to the so-called cause of Nationalism. They have never cared to enquire whether the nationalism for which they are to make their offerings will, when established, give them social and

economic equality. More often than not, the free independent national state which emerges from a successful nationalism and which reared on their sacrifices, turns to be the enemy of the working class under the hegemony of their masters. This is the worst kind of exploitation that Labour has allowed itself to be subjected to.

If the working classes have to live under a system of Parliamentary Democracy then it must devise the best possible means to turn it to their benefit. As far as I can see, two things are necessary if this object is to be achieved. First thing to do is to discard mere establishment of Trade Unions as the final aim and object of Labour in India. It must declare that its aim is to put labour in charge of Government.

For this it must organize a Labour Party as a political party...It must equally dissociate itself from communal or capitalistic political parties such as the Hindu Mahasabha or the Congress. ...Labour by a separate political organization of its ranks can serve both the purposes. It can fight the battle of India's freedom better by freeing itself from the clutches of the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha. It can prevent itself from being defrauded in the name of nationalism.

What is most important is that it will act as a powerful check on the irrationalism of Indian politics...The second thing for Labour in India to realize is that without knowledge there is no power.

...

Let it not also be forgotten that the pattern of Labour Government is a very difficult one than that of the other classes. Labour government cannot be a government of laissez faire. It will be a government which must essentially be based on a system of control. A system of control needs a far greater degree of Knowledge and training than a laissez faire government does. Unfortunately, Labour in India has not realized the importance of study. All that Labour leaders in India have done, is to learn how best to abuse Industrialists. Abuse and more abuse has become the be-all and end-all of his role as a labour leader.

CITU Protests against Violation of CBT's Decisions

On 13 March 2018, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen wrote to the union labour minister Santosh Gangware on violation of CBT's unanimous decisions regarding Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme (EDLI).

CBT's unanimous decisions were on (1) minimum assurance benefit of Rs 2.5 lakh on account of Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme (EDLI) for the employees who die while in service and (2) a loyalty cum life benefit for the employees retiring from service after 20 years of contributory service in a graded manner on the basis of average monthly wage level drawn at the rate of Rs 30,000, Rs 40,000 and Rs 50,000.

However, by EPFO communication of 21 February and gazette notification no GSR 170 (E) of 15 February, 2018, amending the EDLI scheme; the government only partially implemented the decisions, which are beneficial to the employees, after inordinately delay. EPFO did not give any explanation for such blatant violation of the tripartite decision. Such violation undermined the statutory tripartite forum and credibility of such tripartite exercise besides depriving the employees en masse of their legitimate benefits to be generated out of their own funds, Tapan Sen wrote.

CITU strongly protested and demanded that that the "Loyalty cum Life" benefit under EDLI scheme, as decided unanimously by CBT, be implemented forthwith by separate notification.

Modi Government's False and Misleading Statements on Employment Generation

J S Majumdar

In his budget speech on 1 February, 2018, the Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley made one false statement and one misleading statement in respect of employment generation.

In point 78 of the written copy of his speech, he said, "An independent study conducted recently has shown that 70 lakh formal jobs will be created this year" (FY-18). (*Underline added for emphasis*).

Jaitley's False Statement in Budget Speech

Jaitley's above statement of 'independent study' was false. The study was initiated, designed, guided and approved by the PMO.

Bitten by government's own data bug showing low employment and rising unemployment, Labour Bureau saying that in nine months till December 2016 only 2.31 lakh new jobs were created across eight labour intensive sectors and rising unemployment rate being 5 per cent; 2016-17 Economic survey, quoting Labour Bureau, stating "Employment growth has been sluggish" and Union Statistics Minister D V Sadananda Gowda in a written reply stating in Lok Sabha on 3 August 2016 "'Employment growth has shown signs of slowdown in key labour-intensive and export-oriented sectors, despite GDP growth of up to 7.6 per cent in the last three years"; Modi government was desperate to come out of the depressing picture needing an 'independent' study to counter Labour Bureau data.

In tune, Arun Jaitley's budget speech on employment generation did not rely on Labour Bureau data, but was based on this 'independent study', profiling employment generation as "During last three years, we have taken a number of steps to boost employment generation in the country" and that "These measures have started showing results" followed by claim of '70 lakh formal jobs' creation in FY-18.

How far this study was 'Independent' as claimed by the Finance Minister? The Business Standard broke the story on 16 February stating that on 29 October, 2017 the PMO directed NITI Aayog to give "quick indicators for direct or indirect reflections on employment data" to be able to arrive at "desired trends in employment at the earliest."

As directed by PMO to prepare the report for the period FY-18 on the basis of Employees Provident Fund (EPF) subscribers' data, NITI Aayog asked the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) to provide EPF subscribers' data for the specific period of April-October 2017. Accordingly, EPFO provided 8.7 crore of encrypted data of EPF subscribers from its national data centre at Hyderabad to NITI Aayog. NITI Aayog then provided these data to Pulak Ghosh of Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Bangalore and State Bank of India (SBI) Chief Economist Soumya Kanti Ghosh for preparing the report, as desired by the PMO, sitting in the office of NITI Aayog in New Delhi.

Even the time table was prepared by PMO for this 'independent study'. PMO directed Niti Aayog on 29 October, 2017 to prepare this 'independent study' mainly based on EPFO data; NITI Aayog, accordingly, wrote to EPFO on 2 November; EPFO provided the data to NITI Aayog on 4 and 27 November; IIM Ghosh and SBI Ghosh were brought to Delhi and were seated in the office of NITI Aayog in New Delhi to prepare their 'independent study' report; Ghosh and Ghosh made their presentation to PMO on 12 January, 2018 and the report was approved by PMO; the report

was then published on 16 January; Prime Minister quoted the study report on 20 January in a specially televised interview and finally, the Finance Minister made his budget speech on 1 February, 2018 claiming creation of 70 lakh formal jobs in FY-18.

This 'independent study' was published as "A Study by Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore & State Bank of India". As desired by PMO, IIM Ghosh and SBI Ghosh in their report said, "Surveys to Measure Employment in India is mostly misleading" and that Labour Bureau "Survey has many limitations."

Jaitley's Misleading Statement

This report concluded, "Based on all estimates, payroll of 5.9 lakh (i.e. 7 million annual) generated every month in India in current fiscal". As per this report, in FY-18, total 70.4 lakh payroll enrolment include 55.2 lakh EPF subscribers in 190 industries employing 20 plus persons in an establishment; 8.8 lakh presumed non-EPF ESIC IPs (insured persons) in 65 industries employing 10 plus persons in an establishment; and 6.4 lakh NPS subscribers of Central and State Governments together joining 2004 onward. For ESIC category Ghosh & Ghosh made 50 per cent 'haircut' (in their own language in report) to exclude those who are covered by both EPF and ESIC in establishments employing 20 plus persons. Since it is very empirical, they admitted that it could be further high or low. The report categorised this EPF-ESIC-NPS section as 'organised' or 'formal' sector. This 'formal' sector includes both permanent and vast number of contract employees.

The Union Finance Minister in his budget speech used this 'independent study' conveniently replacing 'formal sector' by 'formal jobs' (permanent jobs) and 'payroll generation' by 'job creation'.

The report of IIM Ghosh & SBI Ghosh is misleading in its conclusion. They ignored the fact that overwhelming majority of 'payroll enrolment' was of 'replacement employment' due to high attrition rate in organised sector including IT and ITES industries and 'natural wastage' of employment.

However, Ghosh & Ghosh in their report never claimed 'generation of employment'. What they concluded was the 'generation of payroll' as reflected in EPF, NPS and ESIC data.

Unauthorised Decoding of Personal Data

In the raging debate of decoding and misusing encrypted data of Aadhaar, Facebook etc, the UIDAI CEO Padey making his hyperbole presentation before the Supreme Court stating 'age of universe for supercomputer to decode Aadhaar personal data' question arises as to how the personal data of EPF subscribers was handed over to unauthorised persons. It was not by hacking, but by willful act of the holders of the data.

Even EPFO was kept in the dark by NITI Aayog about the purpose of asking for the huge volume of 8.7 crore encrypted data of EPS subscribers including the employees' names, dates of birth, permanent account numbers, PF and industry names etc. EPFO placed the entire database on a file server and provided a URL that could be accessed from anywhere by anyone who had the link to the server. After, Ghose & Ghose used the EPF subscribers' data; the URL however, was removed.

The EPFO was established by a special Act of the Parliament. EPFO has tripartite Central Board of Trustees (CBT) as its core. When CITU representative in the CBT and its national vice president A. K. Padmanabhan in the CBT meeting, held on 21 February, 2018, asked as to how EPFO data was released to private researchers, the chairman of CBT and the Union Labour Minister had no answer only saying that it could be discussed later.

Economic Surveys, Budget Legitimise Short-Term Illusory Gains

K. R. Shyam Sundar and Rahul Suresh Sapkal

The government's strategy regarding labour welfare in general and jobs in particular quite clearly projects that temporary jobs and current higher income are good enough.

The biggest challenge the NDA government faces is the fulfillment of its poll promise of huge employment growth. It is rather curious that the Economic Surveys for both 2016-17 and 2017-18 provided data on employment in the organised sector only up to 2012.

The government's strategy regarding labour welfare in general and jobs in particular – as can be gauged from the pronouncements relating to labour in the Union Budget 2018, the thinking projected in the Economic Surveys of the last two years and the recent labour market reforms of the government – quite clearly project its myopic approach to the labour market that temporary jobs and current higher income are good enough.

Economic Surveys and government thinking

The policy measures in this and the earlier Budget should be seen in the context of the policy resolves of the government as demonstrated in the Economic Surveys. The issue of tinkering with employees' provident fund (EPF) has always been there ever since the NDA government came to power – recall the spontaneous violent acts by garment workers in Bengaluru in response to announcements regarding PF withdrawals. In its chapter on '*Clothes and Shoes: Can India Reclaim Low Skill Manufacturing?*', the Economic Survey 2016–17 came up with a proposal to subsidise employers' pay-roll taxes in textiles and apparel firms to "generate employment". It argued that "formal employment" could increase by providing choices to workers with regard to their PF contributions and their parking and contribution to health insurance. Its assumption is that workers would act as rational economic agents and would make informed choices with regard to current take-home pay, health insurance provider and investment of PF money. These assumptions are fantastic and constitute a clear attack on conventional labour institutions like government-assured-safe-social-security.

The Economic Survey 2017-18, following the claims made in the earlier Economic Survey, blames stringent labour laws in India – as opposed to our competitors like Bangladesh, Vietnam and Ethiopia – for not capturing the void created by China's exit from the garment sector. It is again difficult to understand the choice of comparator countries, all of which fare quite poorly in terms of labour standards.

In order to address some of these constraints, including stringent labour laws, the government has introduced pay-roll tax sops, fixed term employment and rise in overtime for the apparel sector. The primary justifications are the inefficiency of government social security institutions (which cannot be denied), facilitating market institutions, and employment generation.

In line with the aforementioned perspective, the government floated the Pradhan Mantri Paridhan Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY) and Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PRRPY) schemes, under which the government subsidises the 12% EPF contribution for establishments for new employees (joining after April 1, 2016) earning less than Rs.15,000 (which is the coverage threshold under the EPF scheme) for three years in apparel and other made-up sectors. Through a notification in October 2016, the government also introduced Fixed Term Employment (FTE) facility to provide numerical flexibility to establishments in the apparel sector. According to the notification, the FT workers will be engaged for a given tenure and the terms and conditions of employment for them will be equal to those for permanent workers and they will be eligible for social security benefits

proportionate to their tenure even if their tenure does not satisfy the eligibility tenure under the relevant law.

Earlier attempts in 2003 by government to introduce FTE did not succeed. Hence, in the guise of inducing investment, promoting export revenue and employment generation; the government introduced FTE along with other sops to textile and other made-up sectors. This is consistent with the central government's strategy on labour law reforms, i.e. introduction of a "hard" reform (i.e. having direct implications of quality of employment) in a "partial" manner, i.e. in a sector or in a special economic zone and then seeking to universalise the same and also in a less visible manner, i.e. through government notifications rather than through amendments to a labour law. On January 8, 2018, the government notified its intent to amend the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central Rules, 1946, to legalise the introduction of FTE across all sectors.

Union Budget 2018

Through this Union Budget the government has now extended its earlier sector specific policy of short term pay-roll tax sops and the FTE to **all** sectors. The universalisation of two schemes is expected to create jobs. However, there are problems with these measures.

One, it assumes that pay-roll tax subsidy will lead to significant employment generation. Up to February 5, 2018; 29,055 and 599 establishments have joined PMRPY and PMPRPY (for textile sector) and cover beneficiaries 21,79,024 and 1,78,492 respectively. To put these numbers in perspective, according to the Annual Report of EPF Organisation for 2015-16 as on March 31, 2016, there were 17.14 crore members (i.e. a member having PF balance in his/her PF account) and 6.70 crore UANs (universal account numbers) have been allotted to members in respect of whom at least one contribution has been received since January 2014. There were on an average 3.76 crore contributing members (i.e. those for whom contributions are regularly remitted).

Two, the government should find money to subsidise far more numbers of establishments seeking exemptions under the pay-roll tax sops schemes which means some tax or cess burden on others. In other words, tax burden will be shifted from one to another or printing of more money. Fiscal problematics cannot be wished away.

Three, the punitive action on employers erring in implementing the pay-roll tax subsidy scheme is ex-post which will not benefit the workers removed prematurely from service.

Four, in the case of any FTEs there can be disengagement (escape) clause before the expiry of prescribed tenure. These will increase costs to the government.

The new regulations on FTE make it mandatory on the part of the employers seeking to hire workers on fixed term contracts to provide equal terms and conditions of employment and make proportionate social security contributions, even if the tenure is not commensurate with those prescribed for cover under law. The FTE provision will in fact formalise all forms of securities save employment security and hence will add to the cost to company (CTC) and as a result will discourage hiring. In the earlier regime of "un-regulated informality" "employment numbers" could have been much higher as the terms and conditions of employment were left to individual bargaining or unilateral determination which reduced the CTC to the company. In the current "regulated informality", the CTC is higher. Hence, employment generation will not be as high as it was earlier.

(Abridged article by K.R. Shyam Sundar, Professor, XLRI, Xavier School of Management and Rahul Suresh Sapkal, Assistant Professor, Maharashtra National Law University, Mumbai)

INDUSTRY & SECTOR

Steel

“Vizag Steel March”

The Sea of Flowing Red

Demanding allotment of captive iron ore mines for Vizag Steel Plant (VSP) of central public sector Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), which has been suffering from acute shortage of iron ore causing huge loss to VSP; employment of displaced persons; and opposing proposed disinvestment of RINL; thousands of employees with their families joined the 26 kms long “Vizag Steel March”, organised by Steel Plant Employees Union (SPEU) of CITU, from steel plant to City Central Park, on 5 April.

After garlanding B. R. Ambedkar’s and Jyotiba Phule’s statues at 5.30 a.m., the March was flagged off by SPEU president Ch. Narasingarao with around 2500 VSP employees and their families joining, about 1000 more employees joining at Gajuwaka crossing and around 2000 employees of other PSUs joining at NAD crossing at about 9 a.m. when the March completing 14 kms.

Captive Mine for VSP Justified

Vizag Steel Plant (VSP) is the only one among the PSU steel plants that has not been allocated any captive iron ore mine. The production cost is 30% higher than those who own captive mines.

This Navaratna steel plant has been running on iron ore supplied from NMDC. Last year, NMDC supplied 6.5 MTs of iron ore to VSP from its Donimalai mines in Chhattisgarh at an average price of Rs.2100 per tonne at the pit head. VSP incurred another Rs.1200–Rs.1300 on transportation plus Rs.600 on royalty spending over Rs.4000 on every tonne by the time it reached the factory. In the discussion in Parliament, it came out that it would have just cost around Rs.500 per tonne if VSP had owned captive iron ore mines. Transportation cost can be reduced if it gets captive mine in Odisha which is closer to Vizag.

The demand for steel remained subdued which resulted in lower prices for VSP’s steel losing about Rs.1000 per tonne of steel.

VSP, which has invested Rs.4000 crore for modernisation to reach 7.3 million tonne of production, has incurred a net loss of Rs.1200 crore for the year 2016-17. This is the second consecutive year of losses after 15 years of continues profits by VSP. (From: Business Standard; 6 August 2017)

From then on, the March was a sea of flowing red with flags, caps and festoons; people coming out from shops and houses and greeting; people standing on flyovers and rooftops watching. On way, the March was welcomed at 22 points by different trade unions and other mass organizations.

By 12 noon, on reaching near the City Central Park, the March culminated into a rally and public meeting. Addressing the public meeting CITU state general secretary M. A. Gaffoor congratulated the VSP employees for the impressive long march and called upon them to lead the movement to its victory achieving captive iron ore mines for VSP and defeating the disinvestment move.

The March was organised by SPEU in coordination with CITU Vizag city committee and the PSU coordination

committee. The March created enthusiasm among the employees more so among the new recruits. For preparatory campaign, SPEU brought out large number of posters and handbills; held departmental committee meetings going upto shop floor committees; departmental committees conducted campaign collecting signatures of employees on 'consent' to participate in the March. An oath taking programme was organised on 30 March by EAS Sarma, the ex-secretary (energy) of GOI at martyrs' centre of RINL. On 19 March "Walk for Mines" was organised by SPEU leaders walking 10 kms from the steel plant. Padayatras were also organised on 2 April in the steel plant township and at other places. PSU coordination committee organised a public meeting at Old Gajuwaka crossing in support of the March.

Electricity

Against Privatisation of Electricity

Big Victory of Electricity Workers & Engineers in U.P.

BJP's Yogi Adityanath government of Uttar Pradesh issued notification for privatisation of electricity supply in seven districts of Etawah, Kannauj, Orai, Raebareli, Saharanpur, Mau and Ballia and for that called tenders; and also issued notification for privatisation through franchisees of state public sector DISCOMs (electricity distribution companies) in the five cities of Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Meerut and Moradabad.

Protesting against these privatisation moves of Yogi government, under the banner of the Electricity Employees Joint Struggle Committee, the joint platform of all electricity unions and associations; the electricity workers and engineers unitedly launched statewide successful agitation including demonstration, dharna, state level protest rally on 14 March, 'work boycott' on 27 March, work-to-rule since 28 March and notifying 3 days strike from 9 April.

By 5 April Yogi government backed down and state power minister Shrikant Sharma invited the Struggle Committee for discussion. After prolong discussion in his presence on 5 April, a written agreement was signed between Electricity Employees Joint Struggle Committee and the Principal Secretary (Energy) cum Chairman of state public sector U.P. Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) that (i) tenders of privation in seven districts were withdrawn; (ii) "any reforms in power distribution will be done within the existing system of power distribution corporations in Uttar Pradesh and after taking the employees and engineers into confidence"; (iii) and that "There shall be no privatisation at any place without taking employees and engineers into confidence"; (iv) other demands would be discussed and settled bilaterally and that (v) there shall be no disciplinary action against any employee / engineer for participation in the present movement.

CITU, in a statement, congratulated the UP electricity workers and engineers for their successful united agitation and victory by forcing Yogi government to withdraw the tenders floated for privation of electricity supply in seven districts; rolling back the proposal of handing over entire electricity distribution to private franchisees in five cities; to continue the distribution and supply of electricity within the 'existing system' of state public sector DISCOMs; and extracting a 'no privatisation of electricity at any place' undertaking from Yogi government.

This victory of electricity employees in Uttar Pradesh against privatisation is significant in the background of ongoing countrywide struggle of electricity employees and engineers under the banner of National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers (NCCOEEE) who staged a massive rally in front of the Parliament on 3 April and notified one day countrywide strike, the day Modi government introduces the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2014 in the Parliament.

The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2014 has proposed segregation of electricity distribution into two parts – (i) the 'Carriage' or infrastructure of electricity distribution, which shall remain mainly with DISCOMs or their franchisees; and (ii) the 'Content' which will be open to multiple private suppliers through single distribution network in a particular area under 'Open Access' system.

Even before the Bill is introduced in the Parliament, Yogi government tried to operationalise it in Uttar Pradesh when UPPCL issued tenders inviting private parties for 'Content' part of electricity distribution who

wage revision process and content in CPSUs specially the affordability condition and the directive of 'three yearly review' of wage agreement," and (2) To hold all India joint convention of public sector workers in New Delhi on 25 May 2018 on the above issues and decide future course of action. The convention unanimously adopted the declaration.

Meeting of AICC of CPSUs (CITU)

Prior to the joint national convention, a meeting of All India Coordination Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CITU) was held at Ernakulam on 7 April attended by 154 representatives from CPSU unions from all over India. Two papers were presented in the meeting. One was on intensive onslaught of privatisation of CPSUs and simultaneous all-round attacks on CPSU workers including their job security, remuneration, and other rights by Modi government. The other one was on strengthening CITU organisation to resist these attacks. After 23 delegates participated in the deliberation, both the papers with suggestions and tasks were adopted unanimously.

The meeting also discussed the main conclusions of the CITU Kozhikode GCM; independent campaign among CPSU workers towards building powerful united movement; and on massive mobilisation of CPSU workers in the CITU's 5 September calls of not-less-than-2-lakh-workers rally in Delhi.

Banking

3 Days Massive Strike in Rural Bank

United under United Forum of Regional Rural Bank Unions (UFRRBU), about 90,000 workers and officers in 21,000 branches of 56 Rural Banks were on massive countrywide 3 days strike on 26-28 March protesting against government's policy of backdoor privatisation and depriving the employees similar pension and other benefits with that of employees of nationalised banks and regularisation of jobs of daily rated employees.

The employees and officers staged demonstrations in front of bank offices and held public meetings. Movement of RRB employees began in February itself including 20 February demonstrations in front bank offices; 6 March demonstration in front of Nabard offices and 20 March dharna before the Parliament. Young bank employees enthusiastically participated in all agitational programmes. United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), the joint platform of all unions of workers and officers in banking industry, extended support to RRB employee and officers just demands, agitation and strike. CITU GCM adopted a resolution extending support to the 3 days strike of RRB employees.

The central government and rural banks managements are deviating from the tribunals' and Supreme Court's judgements to provide wages, allowances and service conditions of RRB employees similar to those in nationalised banks.

Discrimination of RRBs and deprivation of its employees by the government led to the verge of starvation of about 25,000 retired workers and officers of RRBs in absence of pension. About 20,000 daily rated employees are deprived of even minimum wages. Despite agreement, over two years the the managements are not implementing the agreement on compentionate recruitments, computer increment and promotion rules even after issuing orders.

15 March, 2018

Trade Unions Joint National Protest Day

In response to the call of national protest day on 15 March, 2018 against FDI in defence production and in solidarity with defence civilian employees' struggle against the same; against privatisation, anti-people union budget 2018-19 and against anti-workers labour laws amendments; rallies, dharnas, demonstrations and public meetings were held in different parts of the country. Following are some limited reports received at CITU centre.

Kerala: National Protest Day was observed jointly by the trade unions on 15 March in districts headquarters and area centres numbering 11 in Kollam, 1 in Pathanamthitta, 9 in Kottayam, 5 in Idukki, 14 in Alappuzha, 1 in Ernakulam, 13 in Trissur, 13 in Palakkad, 11 in Kozhikode, 3 in Waynad, 6 – Kannur, 5 in Kasaragod, by organising marches and holding meetings.

Bihar: State units of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, AICCTU, UTUC, AIUTUC, TUCC and others brought out rally from radio station at Frazer road to Buddha Park in the state capital Patna where it converted into a public meeting addressed by the leaders of central and state unions. The rally was also in protest against violent attack on the people of Tripura by the ruling dispensation of BJP-extremist combine.

Punjab: At national joint call, protest rallies and demonstrations were organised by Punjab CITU at Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Raikot, Ropar, Barnala, Bhatinda, Pathankot, Sangrur, Mansa and other at places. At several places effigies of Modi government were also burnt.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands: Organised by CITU, workers from different trade unions in Port Blair and in South Andaman areas staged demonstration at Tiranga Park in Port Blair. Processions were brought out and demonstrations were staged also at Rangat and Billiground.

Protest against Fixed Term Employment

Punjab

In response to CITU GCM call to protest and in solidarity with workers general strike against Modi government's Fixed Term Employment notification to replace the permanent workers, rally and public meeting was held at Ludhiana, Punjab on 2 April.

West Bengal

Thousands of workers of CITU, INTUC, AITUC, TUCC, UTUC, HMS, AICCTU, AIUTUC and federations - BEFI, FMRAI, Mercantile Federations and BSNL - staged demonstration before the RLC(C) in Kolkata on 2 April raising slogans against the Central government's 16 March notification of fixed term employment replacing permanent employment with and demanded its withdrawal. The gate meeting was addressed by CITU state general secretary Anadi Sahu, Ramen Pandey of INTUC; Ujjal Choudhury of AITUC; Debdas Chatterjee of TUCC; Dipak Saha of UTUC; Basudeb Basu of AICCTU; Dilip Mukherjee of AIUTUC and B. C. Pal of HMS. CITU national leaders Shyamal Chakraborty and Dipak Dasgupta were also present. The gate meeting was presided by CITU state president Subhas Mukherjee. A delegation submitted memorandum to the RLC (C).



FARMERS AGITATION

Farmers Gheraoed Vidhan Sabha in H.P.

The long march of Kisan movement from Rajasthan to Maharashtra via Uttar Pradesh reached Himachal Pradesh on 3 April when thousands of farmers from different parts of the State marched to gherao Vidhan Sabha in Shimla protesting against anti-farmer policy of BJP governments in the State and Centre and raising nationwide common demands of loan wavers, remunerative prices and state demands relating to issues of eviction of farmers, MSP of Rs 30 / litre of milk, Rs.225 as daily wages to MNREGA workers and full work instead of 36 days work as of now and ending stray cattle and animal menace destroying crops.

Land and eviction of farmers have become crucial issues in the state. After the amendment in the Revenue Act, as many as 1,67,399 farmers came forward filing affidavit to apply for regularization of forest land. However most of them are facing eviction under Himachal Pradesh Public Premises and Land (Eviction and Tenancy Recovery) Act 1971. The rally also demanded five acres of land to small and marginal farmers.

The march, rally and gherao were organised jointly by HP Kisan Sabha of AIKS and HP Seb Utpadak Sangh led by its president and CPI(M) MLA Rakesh Singha. Thousands of farmers started the protest march from Panchayat Bhavan, held protest rally on Cart Road and **encircled the Vidhan Sabha for hours together** bringing the traffic movement into halt.

Addressing the rally AIKS national joint secretary Dr Bijoo Krishnan blamed Modi government's policies for peasant distress. New forest policy, contract farming and amendment to the Tenancy Act aggravated the problems. He said that Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has only benefitted 11 big insurance companies by over Rs.10,000 crore as reported by CAG recently. He gave call to join nationwide *Jail Bharo* (courting arrest) programme of AIKS on 9 August after series of countrywide protests and massive mobilisation to Delhi on 5 September.

Addressing the agitating farmers, Rakesh Singha blamed the BJP government for the eviction of farmers from land occupied by the forest department. Instead of implementing promise made to farmers during the 2014 general election, BJP was creating rift among the people in the name of caste and religion. Singha said that more than 2000 cases of land regularization are pending in the state. Small and marginal farmers are under distress today as they were facing eviction of their holdings under grab of court order to remove encroachments which is making them completely landless.

A memorandum was submitted to the chief minister. (*From: UNI & Tribune*)

Kisan Rally in Uttar Pradesh

Inspired by victorious struggle of farmers led by AIKS in Rajasthan and Maharashtra, its another state unit, the Uttar Pradesh Kisan Sabha, held '*Kisan Pratirodh Rally*' in Lucknow on 15 March demanding effective loan waver and remunerative price on Swaminathan Committee's recommendation; rollback of increased electricity charges and its privatisation in the state; crop protection from stray castles and animals; Rs.5000 as pension to farmers and agricultural workers on attaining 60 years of age; effective PDS to all; and end of attack on socially marginalised Dalits, Adivasis, Minorities and Women.

To obstruct the Kisan rally, huge police force was deployed by Yogi government who prevented Kisan procession to begin from Charbagh railway station and, at the last moment, cancelled permission rally venue at Rifa-e-Aam Club ground. Only, under threat of gherao of the Assembly, the government permitted holding

meeting at isolated Laxman Mela ground.

The Kisan rally and mass meeting at Laxman Mela ground was addressed by AIKS national president and Maharashtra Kisan Long March leader Ashok Dhawale, its general secretary Hannan Mollah, CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Subhasini Ali and state Kisan Sabha leaders. CITU national vice president J. S. Majumdar along with state CITU leaders was present to express workers solidarity.

In Uttar Pradesh the Yogi government's declared loan waver has become a farce as vast majority of small and marginal farmers are denied loan wavers. On different pretext and conditionalities many beneficiaries got ridiculous amounts even cheques having Re1 to Rs.50 etc. "Uttar Pradesh government has increased electricity tariff since 2016 and now in 7 districts electricity is being given in private hands. The electricity prices have gone up to 150 times in the past", said Mukut Singh, AIKS state secretary, as quoted by *Newsclick*. (From: *Times of India*; *Newsclick*)

Police Action against Rajasthan Peasants

Rajasthan police on 1 April resorted to lathi charge, teargas shelling and firing rubber bullets on farmers who had been staging peaceful sit-in for the past 22 days demanding removal of the illegal toll plaza at Chanwaji Road near Chomu in Jaipur district. The police action took place when AIKS national vice president and CPI(M) state secretary Amra Ram was addressing the demonstrators. At least a dozen farmers suffered injuries. Amra Ram along several others was arrested.

AIKS and AIAWU in a joint statement condemned the police action and the subsequent arrest of Amra Ram and others and demanded their unconditional release. AIKS gave call for statewide protests on April 2 demanding unconditional release of its leader and farmers and action against the erring police officials. AIKS is also demanding removal of the toll booth, which has been operating illegally over past two years.

Tamilnadu

V. P. Chinthan Birth Centenary Celebration

Yearlong statewide V. P. Chinthan birth centenary celebration was inaugurated on 18 March at Salem holding a workers rally and public meeting with cultural programme; was presided over by CITU state president A. Soundararajan and was addressed by T. K. Rangarajan, M.P., Justice (Retd) K. Chandru, CITU state general secretary G. Sugumaran, state WWCC convener Mahalakshmi and others.

V. P. Chinthan was an iconic figure in the trade union movement of erstwhile Madras Presidency. He actively participated in freedom movements during his student days and was arrested on many occasions. V. P. Chinthan played a crucial role in mobilizing all sections of the workers; led trade union movement at a crucial time in early seventies; mobilized the workers in and around major industries in Chennai including Ashok Leyland, WIMCO, TVS Group, Simpson, Binny Mills, state transport etc. V. P. Chinthan had written several books on trade union movement; was elected to the state legislative assembly effectively utilizing the forum for the working class and downtrodden. Chinthan breathed his last while attending a conference at Moscow in 1984.

Yearlong programme of V. P. Chinthan birth centenary celebration includes - holding trade union classes for the young cadres, working women and district leadership; - organising social activities like medical camps, blood donation camps, cultural programmes etc; - and organising seminars and conventions on the present neoliberal and policy challenges. (*Inputs*; K. C. Gopikumar)

STATES

West Bengal

Protest against Panchayat Election on May Day

Thousands of workers of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, UTUC, HMS, AICCTU, TUCC and of federations jointly staged a massive demonstration in front of state election commissioner's office on 2 April protesting against state election commission's notification on holding panchayat election on May Day, the International Workers Day. In consultation with TMC-led state government, the state election commission notified three phase panchayat election on May 1, 3 and 5 deliberately keeping election of 50 per cent seats in 12 districts on 1 May.

A delegation of trade unions met the state election commissioner and handed him over a memorandum demanding rescheduling panchayat poll, keeping 1 May out of election schedule, and not to interfere with the rights of the workers to observe International Workers Day on 1 May.

Addressing the gate meeting CITU national vice president Shyamal Chakraborty said that the state election commission has no right to declare election date on 1 May depriving the workers from their right of May Day, earned through struggles, sacrifices and martyrdom in different parts of the world. He said that the chief minister's announcement of declaring 2 May as holiday in lieu of May Day is ridiculous attempt of replenishing May Day. CITU state president Subhas Mukherjee, general secretary Anadi Sahu and Ramen Pandey of INTUC also addressed the meeting.

The trade unions also jointly filed petition before the High Court in Kolkata against fixing panchayat poll date on May Day. The petition has been admitted pending hearing.

CITU Condemned Fixing Panchayat Poll on May Day & Violence

In a statement on 11 April, CITU condemned the TMC government in West Bengal for fixing panchayat poll on May Day, the Day of International Solidarity of the Working Class, recognized internationally including ILO. TMC government bulldozed the request of joint trade unions to keep May Day out of election schedule which reflected its brazen authoritarian attitude towards working class and the people and their basic democratic rights. This attitude is also reflected in patronizing TMC goons resorting to violence including assault and causing injuries to the candidates, leaders and supporters of the Left and others preventing submission of nomination papers and forcing to withdraw it.

CITU fully supported the trade unions in West Bengal in challenging the TMC government for fixing election date on May Day; and extended solidarity to the heroic resistance of the trade unions, mass organizations and Left parties against the brutal attacks on their rights.

Delhi

Strike of DMC Contract Workers Ended in Victory

Led by Anti-Malaria Ekta Karmachari Union of CITU, 3500 contract workers of three Delhi municipal corporations (DMCs), engaged in preventive health work and named as Domestic Breeding Checkers (DBC), were on indefinite strike since 12 March and relay fast since 13 March, demanding regularisation of their jobs

and all other statutory benefits applicable to regular workers, ended in a victory on 28 March. The strike was total beyond the membership of the union in all 12 zones of 3 DMCs. 1500-2000 men and women workers joined the dharna and relay fast daily in front of the Civic Centre, the headquarter of undivided DMC.

Safai workers with their own demands also joined the struggle and blocked all 7 entry gates of the Civic Centre. Employees displayed black flags and blocked the entry of officers and councilors. The leaders of fraternal unions including of Water Board, construction, Anganwadi, offices & establishments, general workers and insurance joined dharna in solidarity and extended support. Leaders of Delhi state committees of AIDWA and DSMM also came at dharna place to extend support. Looking into the success of the struggle, BMS union also supported the strike. Top Delhi state leaders of BJP, Congress and AAP came to dharna place and supported the demands and the strike. AAP councilors staged dharna inside the Civic Centre. Both ruling and opposition councilors raised the issue in the corporations' sessions.

On the very second day of the strike, the top administrative officers of all three DMCs had invited the union leaders for discussion and agreed on demands and assured their time-bound implementation except of regularisation on the plea that the issue was pending in the court; and also avoided giving written minutes on agreed points. As such, the strike and agitation continued.

Ultimately, on 28 March, administrations of all three DMCs provided written minutes and issued implementation orders after which the agitation was called off. The minutes and orders include NDMC withdrawing its proposal of 4 months service break; entitlement of 1 CL for every month and all festival and gazette holidays; coverage of all employees under EPF and ESIC(C); the union will submit all documents concerning regularisation of jobs and all three DMCs will respond within one month. (*Inputs: Anurag Saxena*)

Odisha

Massive March to Assembly for Minimum Wage

Thousands of workers mostly from unorganised sector like in construction, transport, mines, Anganwadi, Asha, mid day meal, Krushak Sathi, Bank Mitra and others joined CITU-led massive state level procession, dharna and demonstration in front of Odisha Assembly on 9 April.

A colorful rally started from Bhubaneswar Railway Station marched towards Assembly and at police barricade converted into sit-in dharna and staged demonstration.

In a memorandum to the chief minister and labour minister on 22 point charter of demands included demands for fixation of minimum wage of Rs.18,000 and all scheme workers coverage in it; early registration and distribution of welfare benefits to construction workers; regularization of outsourced, casual, contract and service provider workers; equal pay for equal work; 60 years retirement age in private sector etc. Main focus of the agitation, however, was on immediate enhancement of minimum wages which is much lower in comparison to other neighbouring states. Labour minister assured the delegation of enhancing minimum wages of the state after taking decision at appropriate level.

The public meeting at dharna place was presided by Lambodar Nayak and addressed by state general secretary Bushnu Mohanty, vice president Sivaji Patnaik, Ex-MP, Radharaman Sarangi, Naba Kishore Mohanty, Biman Maity, Lovakanta Swain, Ullash Swain, Ramesh Jena, Satyananda Behera, Sridhar Mishra, Issani Sarangi, Banabasini Mohapatra, and others. Purna Chandra Padhi, Suresh Routray, Santosh Behera, Chandan Acharya played important role to organize the movement. (*Inputs: Ramesh Jena*)

INTERNATIONAL

Railway Workers 3 Months Long Rolling Strike in France

Protesting against French government's plan of railways privatisation and cuts in existing benefits of the employees; the railway workers unions in the state-owned SNCF began their 3 months long rolling strike, 2 days strike in every 5 days, on 3 April and will continue till 28 June.

Former investment banker President Macron's government says heavily-indebted SNCF needs deep reforms as EU countries prepare "to open passenger rail to competition by 2020". And for that rail workers permanency in jobs will end and existing benefits need to be cut.

The propaganda mill of the government dubbed SNCF workers 'enjoying generous conditions of work'. How? Because they are employed till retirement age, gets annual increments, gets 28 days paid earned leave in a year, free rail pass for dependents and protection against arbitrary dismissals! Macron government wants to phase out these 'special SNCF contracts', proposing to put new recruitment on contract basis. On the other side, the unions accused the government of backdoor attempt of privatisation through merging existing three entities of SNCF into a single entity and its corporatisation, a step towards privatisation.

CITU's Congratulatory Message

Through CGT of France, CITU has sent congratulatory message on 6 April to the striking railway workers of France for their unique and successful rolling strike and expressed support to the issue of strike and solidarity with their action.

CITU Condemned US-led Military Attack on Syria

In a statement on 16 April, CITU strongly condemned the illegal joint military attack by US, UK and France on Syria in gross violation of international law on the trumped up charge against Assad government using chemical weapon; despite rejection of the resolution for such US led military intervention by the UN Security Council; and before the inspection by the International Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on invitation by Assad government. This is a part of the imperialist attempts to redistribute natural resources and spheres of influence and to help the terrorist group operating in Syria, the statement said.

CITU asserts that it is the people of Syria alone who have the right to democratically decide their affairs without any interference by the imperialists. CITU demands of the Government of India to condemn such attacks.

CITU called upon the working class of the country to stand in solidarity with the working class and the people of Syria who have been forced to suffer because of imperialist interventions in their country.

Trade Union in Syria called for Support and Solidarity

Earlier, the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) of Syria, uniting the entire working class of the country, called for support of WFTU, International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions and their affiliates for international solidarity and support action and sending solidarity messages to them and the concerned embassies condemning the US and its allies. They accused "USA, UK, France and their proxies in the region such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and others" for provoking terrorist war against Syria for last 8 years; and resorting to false propaganda with fabricated evidences, latest being the allegation of Eastern Ghouta hit by 'chemical weapons' by Syrian army on the basis of false and fabricated videos of the so-called White Helmets, who are the medical wing of the terrorists Al-Nusra in Syria.

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(BASE 2001=100)**

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Kisans in Action

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Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



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