



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

CITU MAHANADA @ BENGALURU



**State President Varalakshmi Addressing
Historic Workers Rally at Bengaluru on 14 September, 2017**

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All India Convention of Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Jan Pritirodh Andolan

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Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi; 19 September, 2017

People's Growing Resistance

WORKING CLASS**OCTOBER 2017****EDITORIAL BOARD****Editor****K. Hemalata****Working Editor****J.S. Majumdar****Members****Tapan Sen****A. K. Padmanabhan****Amitava Guha**

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In the background of serious attacks on the rights and livelihood of different sections of the toiling masses and as citizens of democratic, secular, federal Republic of India, as enshrined in its Constitution - all of which are under attack by BJP governments and RSS outfits – there is also rapidly growing opposition of masses.

Last few months have seen different sections of the people rising in organized and spontaneous protests in different parts of the country. They include working class movement; the peasants and agricultural workers movement; the movements of students, youths and women; of Dalits, Advasis, minorities; the movements of other social organisations and platforms; the movement against shrinking democratic space, for rational and scientific thinking; against state repression, authoritarianism and trend of fascism. All these are also in the agenda of working class movement. In addition to earlier ones, this issue of *The Working Class* is trying to chronicle some of those major events in brief.

The other aspects are the commonality and convergence of all these movements resulting in rapid emergence of large number of common movemental platforms. These movemental platforms have two very objective directions. One is the desire of unity of all economically exploited and socially oppressed sections in the lowest strata of the society, not confined in isolated pockets,

but in ever expanding circular waves. The other one is to develop - from the phase of opposition to the stage of resistance - and then to advance upholding the democratic norms as rights and in practice.

In the darkness of corporate–communal rule, a great opportunity arises for the working class of India. Without intervention and effective participation of the working class the organized and spontaneous struggle of other sections of the toiling masses cannot advance. It is the historic responsibility of the working class. The pre-condition is working class unity as the supreme task discarding all sectarian and opportunistic approach.

For these, CITU has the ideological foundation, political understanding and experience of building united movement. It is not sufficient to participate in these movements. It is necessary to join such movements with full dedication and complete understanding.

Condolence

Comrade Subodh Mehta



CITU Secretariat expressed profound grief at the demise of veteran trade union leader and freedom fighter Comrade Subodh Mehta.

Comrade Subodh Mehta functioned as the general secretary of CITU Gujarat state committee and later as its president. He was a member of the national working committee of CITU for a long period. He was a well recognized and respected leader of the trade union and democratic movements of the state. Comrade Subodh Mehta also functioned as the secretary of the state committee of CPI (M) and as a member of its central committee. CITU conveyed its heartfelt condolences to his comrades and the bereaved family members.

In the Parliament

Tapan Sen on Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill

Participating in the discussion in Rajya Sabha, on 10 August, on the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill for recovery of bank loans; CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP said that those who are pilfering banks money, tax-payers money, are given respectable names like 'non-performing assets', 'stressed assets' and 'non-cooperative borrowers'. Tapan Sen said that RBI made public statement that banks should go in for a 'haircut' to address the NPAs. It means, writing-off loans and around Rs.3 lakh crores has been written off from banks books. To make the Bill ineffective, the government, through RBI, intentionally is empowering the banks, to recover loans in a manner so that the banks need not be held accountable. 'Why is RBI in between', Tapan Sen asked. It is the banks which are suffering from loan defaults.

For recovery of loans, action has been proposed against only 12 companies; the amount involved is Rs. 2.53 lakh crores, only 25% of the total estimated NPAs. 80 per cent of NPAs are due from just 50 companies. "*The sovereign Government of India is having sovereign powers, but they cannot take an appropriate action against 50 companies*", Tapan Sen said. And "*who are they? They are accompanying the Ministers in their foreign trips. And, these foreign trips are facilitating Business - contracts with those private companies in Israel and other countries.*"

FRDI Bill is being brought. It is structured to liquidate banks which are under loss. Deputy Governor of the RBI talks everyday that everything should be 're-privatized.' "Today, you are empowering the banks to invoke the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code on the companies who have taken loans. Tomorrow, the FRDI Bill will empower the Government to invoke the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code on the banking companies also, including the nationalized banks," Sen said. T.K. Rangarajan has moved amendments in the Bill proposing only supervisory role of RBI and not direct intervention. RBI must not select the companies for recovery of loans. The responsibility of selecting the companies against whom the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code is to be invoked has to be discharged by the board of directors of the bank. Only then, the accountability can be established and the process can be expedited. Otherwise, it will only be 12 companies; rest of the 38 companies will let go free. Tapan Sen said that steel sector is facing a severe crisis, but none of the public sector steel companies has defaulted in paying back loans to banks. The SAIL is bleeding after a loss of Rs.4,000 crores, but they have not defaulted in debt servicing to the banks. You are targeting Air India's wholesale privatisation, but they have not defaulted in loan repayment for a single day.

To address the issue effectively, there is an urgent need of expanding and strengthening of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) which is seriously overstressed due to the accumulation of cases causing delays.

JOINT MOVEMENTS

CTUs Call for 3 Days MahaPadav before Parliament (9-11 November, 2017)

After successful national convention of the workers in the Talkatora Indoor Stadium on 8 August (*Working Class; September, 2017*); all 10 central trade unions in the common platform gave clarion call to make 9–11 November, 3 days, MahaPadav before the Parliament a big success to send strong message to the ruling elites of corporate and governance, led by prime minister Narendra Modi, about the resolve of the working class of the country to resist their attacks and advance for rights and social justice.

The Call

The central trade unions heartily congratulate and deeply appreciate the workers of the country for their magnificent participation in the National Joint Trade Union Convention on 8th August 2017 at the Talkatora Stadium in Delhi. The Talkatora Stadium was not only packed to the full with no space to stand but as many workers were outside the hall as were inside it. Workers from all sectors, from the organised and unorganised, from the public and private sectors, men and women from all over the country – from the strife torn Jammu and Kashmir to the far off Tamil Nadu and Kerala participated in large numbers in the convention.

The great enthusiasm with which the workers responded to the calls for action in the Declaration is proof of their determination to fight back the Modi led BJP government's onslaught on their working and living conditions and on their hard won trade union and labour rights.

The time now is to concretely plan effective implementation of the calls given by the 8th August National Convention. The central trade unions call upon the entire working class in the country, irrespective of their affiliations, to strengthen their unity up to the grass root level and intensify the joint campaign on the 12 point charter of demands. Prior to that the joint campaign through state, district, industrial centre level joint conventions, distribution of joint leaflets, posters and mobilisations should lead to an unprecedented massive THREE DAYS PADAV (Ghera Dalo - Dera Dalo) at the National capital on 9, 10 and 11 November 2017 to warn the Modi led BJP Government that its attack on the workers will no more be tolerated. This joint struggle of the workers should lay the path for still more powerful struggles of the workers should lay the path for still more powerful struggles including indefinite countrywide general strike if the government ignores the demands of the joint trade union movement and continues with its disastrous anti workers and anti people policies.

The central trade unions call upon the workers all over the country to start preparations for such powerful struggles at once under the banner of joint platform of Central Trade Unions and Independent Federations of Workers and Employees. We don't have time to lose.

INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, LPF, UTUC

All India Convention of **Class, Mass and Social Movements**

Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan emerged out as the common platform of more than 100 class, mass and social organisations and of movements including CITU with its president Hemalata in its national Organising Committee. It held an All India Convention at the fully packed Mavlankar Hall in New Delhi on 18 September.

The Convention adopted three basis slogans – *Jan Ekta, Jan Adhikar and Jan Pratirodh (People's Unity, People's Rights and People's Resistance)*. The convention adopted a declaration with action programmes and a people's charter.

All India action programme includes (i) meetings / procession with 'Ekta Mashal', the flame of unity, (with mashal or candle light) in district and lower levels on 30 October with the message of unity of the people; (ii) holding conventions in all states, districts and lower levels with all the organisations and movements in it and expanding further in states; (iii) a higher form of action programme during next budget session as will be decided by the Organising Committee. The convention expressed support and called for people's solidarity actions with the united working class struggle including Workers All India MahaPadav on 9-11 November in New Delhi and Peasants' All India March to Parliament on 20 November.

The Convention

Entire Organising Committee was in the presidium. SFI general secretary Vikram Singh welcomed the delegates; AITUC secretary Amarjeet Kaur made introductory speech; AIKS (36 Canning Lane) general secretary Hannan Mollah placed the convention declaration with action programmes; AIKS (Ajay Bhawan) general secretary Atul Kumar Anjan placed the 24 points people's charter of demands and AIPWA general secretary Kavita Krishnan spoke supporting the declaration and demands.

Several other members of the Organising Committee, leaders of different class and mass organisations and movements also spoke in support of the declaration, charter of demands, action programmes and also explaining general and sectoral situations. CITU vice president J. S. Majumdar spoke on behalf of CITU.

The declaration highlighted increasing attacks on different sections of the people by Modi led BJP government betraying pre-poll promises; institutionalizing corruption including corporate funding to political parties; farmers distress, suicides, police killing, as in Mandsaur, for demanding MSP based on Swaminathan Committee report; denying loan waivers to poor peasants but writing off record Rs.1.91 lakh crore of willful corporate bank loan defaulters during 3 years of its rule; corporatization of agriculture through FDI and contract farming; forcible land acquisition, large scale displacement and dispossession of rural poor; not implementing forest right Act for Adivasis and traditional forest dwellers, dilution of SPT/CNT Act; dilution and non-implementation of MNREGA; pauperization of agricultural workers in absence of jobs, minimum wage and social security; deteriorating unemployment situation; adverse impact of demonetization and GST on jobs and denial of social security by Aadhar linkage; attack on workers' rights, livelihood and labour laws; massive drive for privatization of PSUs; commercialization of health and education; growing attacks on dalits and minorities; attack on animal trading ruining rural economy; brutal state repression; imposition of Hindi on non-Hindi speaking people; shift in independent foreign policy tilting to USA; governments' apathy in controlling spiraling price rise, looting people on LPG price rise; encouraging future trading and commodity exchange; promoting patriarchal attitude and increasing violence against women and reservation for women in legislature; all out attack on freedom of expression, Constitutional provisions and shrinkage of democratic space; promoting RSS and fundamentalist ideology and communalisation of education, institutions, governance.

In such a situation the convention called upon *"all left, democratic, secular, rational, progressive and broad minded people to come together and unite to fight back the attacks on them."*

National Convention on **The Right to Food, Health, Education and Care**

A.R. Sindhu



Prof. Prabhat Patnaik addressing the Convention

For providing universal entitlement of 5 basic rights - food, employment, free quality healthcare, free quality education, old age pension and benefits to the disabled – the total cost would be only 8% to 10% of the GDP in India, asserted noted economist Prof. Prabhat Patnaik while inaugurating the national convention on “The Right to Food, Health, Education and Care, The Government, Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Beyond” at Parsi Anjuman Hall in New Delhi on 17 September. He said that there must be unified struggles to achieve these basic rights as fundamental rights which is legally binding. Governments can easily do this by taxing the rich but they are not ready to act for the majority of the people; instead are following policies to benefit the top one percent of the population, he said. He emphasised the role of trade unions in leading such struggles.

The convention was jointly organized by All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH), Mid Day Meal Workers Federation of India (MDMWFI), and All India Coordination Committee of Asha Workers (AICCAW) of CITU in the context of the ongoing attempts by the NDA government to dismantle and privatise the basic delivery systems in the social sector.

AIFAWH treasurer Anju Maini welcomed to participants in the convention presided over by AIFAWH general secretary and CITU national secretary A. R. Sindhu, vice president of MDMWFI Monika Dutta Roy and AICCAW convenor Ranjana Nirula. The declaration of the convention was placed by A.R. Sindhu. The problems in implementation of these schemes and the working conditions of the workers in the respective schemes were presented by AIFAWH president and CITU national secretary Usharani, MDMWFI general secretary Jai Bhagwan and Surekha of AICCAW.

Different expert panelists responded to these presentations, linking up the issues with government policies. Dr. Amit Sengupta, co-convenor of the Jana Swasthya Abhiyan, explained the health sector policies and said that only the assertion of these women workers at the bottom can challenge and break the ‘brahmanwad’ in the society and the system. Devika Singh of the Mobile Crèches spoke about the importance to protect the rights of the child for the society and fight of the scheme workers to be linked to the fight for the rights of the children. Dr. Rajni Palriwala explained the caste, gender and social exploitation linked to the exploitation of the scheme workers and how their fight challenges the present social order. She emphasised that the movement must be conscious and alert against the divisive forces within the movement and to fight against all kinds of discrimination at their workplace as well. Dipa Sinha from the Right to Food Campaign explained how various governments, despite the Supreme Court order and the law, try to dismantle the schemes and go ahead with

privatization. She emphasised on the importance of coordinating with the community and taking it into confidence for the success of the struggles. Indranil Mukherjee, economic researcher, explained that in India government spending on basic services is very low and every year 5.5 crore people are pushed below the poverty line because of their spending for health care which is largely privatized. He said while the government is ready to spend Rs.1,11000 crore for the bullet train which will be used by a maximum of a few lakh people throughout the year, it will cost only Rs.1,08000 crores to provide minimum wages to 60 lakh scheme workers. President of AIAWU A Thirunavukkarasu narrated the conditions of the agricultural workers in the country and their struggles and expressed solidarity with the struggles of the scheme workers. Mayookh Biswas, joint secretary of SFI, expressed solidarity, explained the privatization of education and continuously decreasing purchasing power of the people and the unemployment in the country. Asha Mishra, coordinator of the BGVVS, explained their campaigns and programmes on the people's rights for the basic services and their slogan to 'access, quality and equity'. She explained about AIPSN's call to the scheme workers' organisations to join the people's movement's mobilization in the last week of November in Bhopal. M L Malkotia, treasurer of CITU, explained that CITU's consistent efforts is to organize the scheme workers and fight for their recognition which resulted in the recommendations of the 45th ILC, which were reiterated in 46th ILC. He called upon them to reach the unreached and expose the policies behind the issues to the people. Maimoona Mollah, joint secretary AIDWA, said that as the beneficiaries of these schemes the women's movement and AIDWA will support and fight for the cause of the scheme workers and for strengthening these schemes. CWDS, Forces and HRLN also expressed solidarity with the cause of the scheme workers.

The Convention decided to (i) Involve the beneficiaries and broader sections of people in the struggle to 'Save the Basic Government Schemes for the People's Right to Food, Health, Nutrition and Care'; (ii) Approach people's representatives and ministers jointly on the demands; (iii) Mobilise the scheme workers in large numbers in the three days mass dharna before Parliament on 9,10,11 November 2017 called by the central trade unions and independent federations of employees; and (iv) Join the call by the Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Manch, the joint platform of left, democratic and secular class, mass and social organisations and individuals.

The convention, which was attended by the national working committee members of AIFAWH and MDMWFI and the leaders of the ASHA Workers' unions from Hindi speaking states, called upon the scheme workers to intensify the campaign and struggles in case the government is not ready to stop privatisation and accept the demands of adequate budget allocations, recognition as workers, minimum wages, pension and social security to the workers. It decided to organize the widest possible campaign among the people for the rights for food, health, education and care and stressed on the need to strengthen the ICDS, MDMS and NHM.

Protest against Killing of Gauri Lankesh

CITU joined the countrywide protest against the killing of the journalist, rationalist and activist Gauri Lankesh in front of her residence in Bangalore on 5 September by the gunmen of communal bigots to silence her voice and terrorise those opposing them and the minorities.

Gauri Lankesh merged her total persona with the weekly journal she named, as 'Gauri Lankesh Patrike', published and edited; raising her voice through it exposing the misdeeds of the RSS and its saffron brigade.

Spontaneous protest movement erupted in different parts of the country against her killing uniting all sections of the people including the workers organised in trade unions. Very next day of her killing, CITU condemned killing of Gauri Lankesh, called this murder as the latest in the series of murders of rationalists like Govind Pansare, Narendra Dhabolkar and M.M. Kalburgi by these communal divisive forces; conveyed condolences to her family and colleagues; demanded of the Government of Karnataka to immediately arrest

the culprits and unearth the conspiracy; and called upon the working class of the country to protest against this heinous crime and attack on secularism.

Next week, thousands of people from all walks of life and prominent persons joined “*I am Gauri March*” from railway station to Central College converting into a *Resistance Convention* of the people representing journalists, writers, artists, students, social activists, intellectuals, political parties, workers, farmers and others.

Thirty prominent persons representing different sections addressed the convention including Kannada writers Devanooru Mahadeva and Chandrasekhar Patil, Sitaram Yechury, Medha Patkar, Swami Agnivesh, Prasant Bhusan, P. Sainath, Teesta Setalvad, Jingsesh Mewani, Prof. Ganesh Devy, Sagarika Ghosh, Siddharth Varadarajan, writer / activist Neela K, Kannada actor Chetan and seers of many progressive *Mutths* and chaired by Gandhian and freedom fighter H. S. Doreswamy.

The *Gauri Lankesh Patrike’s* new edition, after her killing, was released on this occasion and it was announced to continue to publish as a voice of defiance. A resolution was adopted in the convention demanding arrest of the culprits; probing the conspiracy targeting the rationalists and activists; and need to form united front against communal forces.

A broad-based meeting in Delhi of several organisations, groups and personalities, also attended by CITU, AIKS and AIDWA, decided to hold a massive protest rally in Delhi on 5 October.

CITU Protest in Punjab

CITU in Punjab brought out rallies and staged demonstration at Ropar by industrial workers of Asron Area in protest against brutal murder of Gauri Lankesh by fundamentalists and communal forces.

Shantanu Bhowmik killed: Within a gap of a fortnight, a young journalist, Shantanu Bhowmik, of a local news channel with strong views for communal harmony in Tripura was killed by BJP supported tribal extremist group IPFT. The journalists and different sections of the people are in countrywide protest against this killing. CITU Tripura state general secretary Shankar Datta, MP joined the massive protest march in Agartala.



Historic Peasants Struggle in Rajasthan

13 days long peasants’ movement by Rajasthan Kisan Sabha of AIKS was historic in massive participation, forms of movement and achievement. Beginning on 1 September, 10 days indefinite day-night MahaPadav (sit-ins) was staged followed by 3 days blockades of arterial roads in front of 20 district collectorates bringing the state in standstill.

Led by AIKS president Amra Ram, 3 times CPI(M) MLA, and Kisan Sabha leader Prema Ram, Sikar became the main centre of the movement. Joined by the trade unions and other mass organisations of students, youths, women, Adivasis, Dalits, traders and others in an unprecedented demonstration of solidarity it became a people’s movement. Women’s participation was significant and played leading role at several places. Several opposition parties also supported the movement and their leaders addressed the meetings of the peasants. People extended support by supplying food and other materials and financial help to the agitating peasants. Brick kiln union and bus and auto drivers unions joined processions with trucketers, buses and autos.

'Wake up' rally was brought out in front of district administrators' residences. 'Funeral' of the Vasundhara Raje led BJP government was held with enthusiastic participation of farmers and large number of women.

Ultimately, group of ministers of Raje government held hours' long discussion, with breaks, with Kisan Sabha delegation, led by Amra Ram and Prema Ram, beginning on 12 September noon and concluding in an agreement in the early hours of 14 September. Then Rajasthan Kisan Sabha called off the agitation with victory celebration throughout the state.

In the agreement, the government agreed Rs.50,000 loan waver benefitting about 8 lakh farmers; agreed MSP on agricultural produce as per Swaminathan formula and purchase groundnut, moong and urad at MSP within 7 days in district headquarters and, further, agreed to write to central government on MSP for modalities of implementation within timeframe; withdrawal of hike in electricity rates for drip irrigation; immediate payment of SC/ST/OBC fellowship with arrears; relaxation on restriction in cattle sale; crop protection from stray cattle and wild animals; Rs2000 as pension to old age farmers; insurance claim for failure of canal irrigation and to stop police harassment to farmers and traders.

On 15 September, CITU issued statement congratulating the Kisan Sabha and the farmers of the successful agitation and achievements; to the workers and trade unions and other sections of the people for their all out support. It is great inspiration to the working class all over the country. CITU called upon the workers to draw lesson and make 9-11 November Workers MahaPadav in Delhi a grand success.

Workers Historic Mahanada in Bangalore

It was the biggest ever workers, also of any other class or mass, rally in Karnataka. Under the banner of CITU Karnataka state committee; 40,000 workers from 178 CITU unions of scheme workers - Anganwadi, Asha, Mid Day Meal; workers of panchayats, municipalities, construction, beedi; headloaders; contract workers - from government, electricity and BSNL; and of private / public sector industries resorted to strike and converged from 30 districts of Karnataka in Bengaluru on 14 September with clarion call of "*Namma Nade - Bengalurinede Maha Nade*" (Mega March towards Bengaluru). The March in procession began from Sangolli Railway Station towards Vidhan Soudha to pursue workers common demands in the state including Rs.18,000 as minimum wage, abolition of contract labour system, implementation of Supreme Court judgement on equal wages for equal work, inclusion of CITU in the minimum wage advisory board and formation of and convening tri-partite Karnataka Labour Conference in line with Indian Labour Conference; and in protest against central government's move of privatisation including BEML.

The March stopped and occupied Sheshadri Road near Freedom Park and staged an indefinite sit-in. The city's main arterial roads became standstill. The agitating workers sit-in was addressed by CITU state president S. Varalakshmi, general secretary Meenakshi Sundaram and CPI(M) state secretary G. V. Sriram Reddy. State labour minister arrived at rally place in the afternoon and announced government's decisions on the rally demands. The government has issued notification to include CITU in the Minimum Wage Advisory Board and agreed to convene Karnataka Labour Conference. The minister also assured to speed up some of the pending legislation for implementation of assurances, given earlier. Some specific issues of workers in the State PSUs and of Mid Day Meal workers were also resolved.

In preparation of the March, district and state level workshops were held and jathas were brought out. A state level jatha from Vidurashwath to Kundapura from 29 July to 13 August reached lakhs of the people (*The Working Class; September, 2017*) popularizing the demands and exposing the governments' and employers' claims and falsehood.

Bank Strike & Rally

“Financial services hit across country; Employees protest against reforms”

That is how the media screamed by evening of 22 August narrating, *“Banking operations across the country were hit on Tuesday as over 10 lakh bank employees in more than 1,30,000 branches pan-India struck work — protesting against reforms in the banking sector among other issues — thereby affecting cheque-clearing activity.”*

Opposing Modi government’s move for privatisation and merger of PSU banks as the forefront issues in the 15 point charter of demands; at the call of United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), the joint platform of 9 unions of workers and officers of the banking industry; employees of public sector banks, including in private sector and foreign banks, regional rural banks and cooperative banks also in some states; have gone on dawn to dusk countrywide strike on 22 August. The strike completely halted banking operation and transaction across the country. Employees of NABARD and Reserve Bank staged demonstrations in solidarity with the striking employees.

The strike was against central government’s move for merger and consolidation of public sector banks (PSBs), shifting the burden of wilful corporate-loan-defaulters on to the customers by increasing service charges and reducing interest on deposits, increasing service charges on account of GST, accommodating wilful loan-defaulters through loan-restructuring, assets-reconstruction, write-offs and waivers, etc; and demanded stringent legislation and administrative measures for recovery of bad-loans, declaration of wilful-default as “criminal offence” entailing exemplary punitive action, implementation of the recommendations of the parliamentary committee on recovery of bad-loans, fixing accountability of top executives for generation of bad-loans, abolition of Banks Board Bureau, (vi) withdrawal of FRDI Bill etc.

Rally in Delhi: In the next phase of agitation, UFBU held a national protest rally in New Delhi on 15 September against privatisation and against anti-people pro-corporate banking reforms. Led by the leaders of UFBU constituents, the procession began from Ram Lila Ground towards the Parliament. When the head of the procession hit the Parliament Street police barricade, its tail was still to come out of Ram Lila Ground, and the body snaking through Connaught place. Slogans were raised against move for privatisation and merger of PSBs, for criminal proceedings against the corporate wilful defaulters and for confiscating their assets for recovery of loans etc.

The procession converted into a rally overflowing the entire Parliament Street. National leaders of different political parties - CPI (M) general secretary and MP Sitaram Yechury, D. Raja, MP of CPI, Digvijay Singh, MP of Congress, Sharad Yadav, MP of JD(U), Arvind Sawant, MP of Shiv Sena addressed the rally extending full support to the bankmen’s struggle. Central Trade Unions leaders, who addressed the rally, include CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP, AITUC leader Amarjeet Kaur and other leaders of INTUC, UTUC, AICCTU and AIUTUC. A delegation of bank unions in UFBU, led by Com. D. Raja, met the finance minister Arun Jaitley and submitted a memorandum highlighting the major issues on which bank unions are agitating. UFBU will resort to 2 days strike in next October / November.

Dalits & Urban, Rural Local Bodies Workers

On 19 September, 38 representatives from 10 states apart from CITU central secretariat members participated in a meeting, called by CITU as per working committee’s decision, at BTR Bhawan in Delhi to discuss the specific issues faced by Dalit workers. President Hemalata introduced the objective of the meeting

and general secretary Tapan Sen made introductory remarks. 17 delegates participated in the discussion, welcomed the initiative and highlighted several types of discrimination being faced by Dalits at workplaces.

Concluding the discussion, Tapan Sen pointed out about government's divisive strategy; the concrete experience narrated by the delegates on discrimination against Dalit workers at work places; need of immediate intervention at grass root level by CITU union and taking up some related policy issues in state and some at all India level; on the importance of addressing the specific issues of Dalits from the trade union platform to strengthen class unity and class struggle. On 20 September, 44 representatives of the unions of panchayat and three tier urban municipal workers from 10 states participated in the meeting at BTR Bhawan. 19 delegates participated in the discussion introduced by Hemalata and Tapan Sen. They narrated the conditions of the local body workers, the impact of the neoliberal policies on their working conditions, their struggles, the attitudes of the government and the organisational situation of their unions. They welcomed CITU initiative and suggested such periodical all India meeting. In his concluding remarks Tapan Sen pointed out about the large scale outsourcing and contractorisation of local bodies work; non-implementation of GOs in several states and absence of safety at work places causing death and health injury to several municipal workers.

CITU secretariat will decide about the future course of action on the basis of suggestions and conclusions of both meetings.

Protest against Workers' Killing in Delhi during Sewerage Cleaning



Delhi CITU with Municipal Workers Lal Jhanda Union and street vendors union, DSMM, SFI, DYFI, AIDWA and AILU jointly held protest rally in front of Delhi government secretariat at ITO on 23 August in protest against killing of Dalit workers during sewerage cleaning and total absence of safety measures. A delegation submitted memorandum addressed to the chief minister demanding filing of criminal cases against the culprit officers; job and compensation to the families of the deceased; use of modern machinery for sewerage cleaning;

end of contractorisation and regularisation of jobs of all contract workers.

Safai Workers State Level Protest Rally in Bihar

Under the banner of Bihar Safai Mazdoor Union, thousands of Safai workers, coming from Patna, Jamui, Begusarai, Bhagalpur districts; brought a state level procession and staged demonstration in front the chief minister's office in Patna on 19 September in protest against inhuman exploitation, discrimination and deprivation of the workers in the lowest strata of the society. The rally and public meeting was presided over by Anup Ram and addressed by CITU leader Arun Kumar Misra, trade unions coordination committee leader Manjul Kumar Das, state government employees leader Shashikant Rai and union's base level leaders Raj Kishore Rai, Maheshwary Ram, Raghunath Paswan, Radhika Devi, Pinku Dom, Vijay Ram, Bablu Kumar, Binda Dom, Raja Kumar Ambedkar, Raju Dom, Sanjay Hari Ambedkar and Dilip Mallick. Union's general secretary Shankar Sah read out the memorandum containing the demands addressed to the chief minister which was unanimously approved. A 5-members delegation met the concerned officers in the ministry and discussed their demands.

Struggling Workers of Local Bodies in Andhra Pradesh

A.P. Gram Panchayat Employees & Workers Union of CITU gave call for "Chalo Vijayawada" and

staged dharnas in front of collectors' offices in districts demanding wage increase.

In urban municipalities there are 40,000 contract and outsourced workers and 10,000 permanent workers. CITU's Municipal Workers & Employees Federation are in struggle for last 19 months against GO No.279 allowing 'outsourcing of work' of municipalities which included 4 times "Chalo Vijayawada"; distribution of lakhs of handbills and pasting thousands of posters. Police resorted to lathi charge targeting and injuring the general secretary and the working president. In Nellore more than 50 workers were injured in police lathi charge and implicating them in false criminal cases. In 3 days strike call by Joint Action Committee (JAC), including CITU, 30,000 workers participated on 11-13 July 2017 strike and 22,000 workers in dharnas and agitations. In Vijayawada ruling party leaders tried to mobilize the workers in support of GO 279. In Srikakulam BMS Union printed pamphlets in favor of GO.279 and tried to demoralize and disrupt the strike, but failed and strike was totally successful. As a result, group of ministers held discussion with the unions on 12 July and stopped tenders for "work outsourcing" for some time. CITU unions are also organizing number of agitation by demanding job security, equal pay to equal work, regularization, separate wages for skilled and semiskilled workers etc. CITU unions served notice for indefinite strike from 15 September. JAC also threatened to serve strike notice. The government held discussion with the JAC on 13 September. CITU unions demanded to stop tender calling for 'work outsourcing'. Next round of discussion is scheduled on 22 September.

Joint Rally of Municipal Workers in Kolkata



At the joint call of their 6 trade unions, more than 2000 municipal workers of West Bengal joined a rally in front Kolkata Municipal Corporation head office at Rani Rashmoni Road on 11 August in Kolkata to pursue their 11 points charter of demands. The rally and public meeting was addressed by CITU state president Subhash Mukherjee, convenor of joint movement committee of municipal workers of West Bengal Dipak Mitra and other union leaders including Tapan Mukherjee, Suranjan Bhattacharjee, Amitava Bhattacharjee and Manas Sinha. The Rally was presided over by Ratan Bhattacharjee. Addressing the meeting Dipak Mitra said about the anti workers attitude of TMC government. Despite several communications in writing, the ministers of municipal affairs and finance did not respond on their demands. The MIC of municipal affairs even refused to accept the memorandum on demands. TMC led local body authorities are trying to trample on the trade union rights of the workers. After the rally, the memorandum of 11 points charter of demands was sent to the government. The demands include regularization of jobs of casual workers; implementation of finance department circular containing benefits to the casual workers; implementation of equal pay for equal work verdict of the Supreme Court; enforcement of labour laws; immediate payment of 34% arrear of dearness allowance; declare 6th Pay Commission recommendation without delay; remove order stopping died in harness benefit; stop motivated transfer, harassment; full trade union right to the workers etc along with other demands.

The rally condemned the anti workers attitude of the TMC government. It was decided that municipal workers resort to agitation jointly at the levels of municipalities, districts and state.

WORKERS – PEASANTS UNITY

Tempered Steel of Keezhvenmani

Vijoo Krishnan

It is in a drought year deemed the worst in over a century and a half that I reached Thanjai better known as Thanjavur in the Cauvery Delta. As we drove from the centre of the Cholas to Keezhvenmani in the Kizhvelur Taluk of neighbouring Nagapattinam district the big temple or the Brihadeswara temple, a world heritage monument had an imposing presence to our left. As it had been with the many places that I had visited over the week the rain greeted us even in this temple town. On two sides of the road we could find tell-tale signs of the once famous rice-bowl which the drought had rendered barren. As we crossed Kizhvelur and turned left towards Keezhvenmani we could see a memorial in the form of a gateway erected on the 25th anniversary of the massacre of 44 Dalit agricultural workers by feudal landlords reminding people of the gruesome incident that took place in 1968. We soon reached the premises of Ramaiahvin Kudisai (the hut of Ramaiah) where the gruesome massacre had taken place. In 1969 the then Deputy Chief Minister of Bengal Jyoti Basu had laid the foundation for a memorial to the martyrs. A black granite martyrs' column on a stellar base inscribed with the names of the 44 killed topped with the red flag of the toiling masses stands there. The hut has been converted into a memorial and a red granite sculpture carved out of a single stone representing the plantain bud has been installed in memory of the dead. A larger memorial called Mani Mandapam just adjacent to the Ramaiah's hut was started by contribution of the organised working class as per a decision of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions. The memorial that aims to tell the story of the oppression, struggle, resistance and sacrifices of the people is surrounded by 44 granite pillars representing each of the martyrs. Raised fists of men, women and children carved in granite adorn these pillars. The entrance to the memorial hall has a sculptured mural depicting the macabre incident that will make an indelible mark on people visiting the place.

Mythili Sivaraman's effective chronicle of the incident and narration by comrades acquainted me with the incident. The carnage was the background for the 1977 Sahitya Akademi award winning novel Kurudhippunal (River of Blood), by Indira Parthasarathy. This was made into a film Kann Sivanthaal Mann Sivakkum (If The Eye Turns Red The Earth Shall Turn Red) in 1983. The massacre was the main subject of the 1997 Tamil language movie Aravindhana. In a 2006 documentary film, Ramaiahvin Kudisai (The Hut of Ramaiah) the survivors told their stories. The 2014 novel The Gypsy Goddess by Meena Kandasamy is also based on this incident. I would attempt to narrate the incidents through the eyes of an eye-witness Sethupathi who had to go through it as a 13 year old, a 7 year old witness Anna Durai, Manoharan, the District Secretary of CPI(M) who still vividly remembers the charred bodies heaped in bullock carts which were taken to Nagapattinam which he saw as a little boy. Mythili Sivaraman's valuable account of the carnage is however the inspiration for the visit and the base for this retelling.

The 'Party of Untouchables' Resists Feudal Oppression

Five decades ago Keezhvenmani was a nondescript village in the midst of beautiful lush green paddy fields of East Thanjavur in the Cauvery Delta. Thanjavur being endowed with assured irrigation from the Cauvery had taken to the Green Revolution techniques in the first flush of its adoption. The rice-bowl as it was called is said to have accounted for a third of the State's paddy production. Landlord oppression continued unabated in the region retaining all the barbarism of feudal age. According to the 1961 census 3.8 per cent of the

cultivating households owning more than 15 acres each, held 25.88 per cent of the cultivated area while 76 percent owning up to 5 acres each possessed only 37 percent of the cultivated area. In addition to the most skewed land ownership pattern Thanjavur also had the highest proportion of landless labourers at 9 labourers for every 10 cultivators. The 1971 census found that as opposed to the State average of 29 percent landless Thanjavur had 41 percent of the rural population as landless labourers with the highest percentage of Dalits among the landless (*Mythili Sivaraman, 1973*). Temple trusts also held large tracts of land which was largely a preserve for the upper caste landed class who secured lease over such land and could get the landless oppressed castes to work on it by exercising their socio-economic as well as political power. Growing land struggles under by the peasants organised by the Left in Thanjavur and elsewhere had led to the abolition of the Zamindari system and two legislations namely the Tanjore Pannaiyal (bonded labourers) Protection Act, 1952 and the Tamil Nadu Tenants Protection Act, 1955 were passed sending shock-waves across the feudal families. It was in such a setting that a decisive struggle for land, wages and dignity was fought in Keezhvenmani with far reaching consequences.

Keezhvenmani was predominantly a village of Dalit agricultural workers who were forced to work on the fields of the oppressive landlords who literally had a stranglehold over the best lands in its vicinity. They were bonded to the landlords and had to render services of the entire family as attached labourer for a pittance. The oppressive working conditions were reinforced by most inhuman punishments. According to the villagers all the depredations of the oppressive caste system were also in operation in the entire region. Untouchability, forced labour, prohibition from using the wells and tea shops, brutal punishments like whipping, force-feeding cow dung, sexual exploitation of women, denial of educational opportunities and prohibition of access to public places like temples were the norm. Dalits were disallowed to wear upper clothing, had to walk barefoot and women were not allowed to cover their breasts. The legislations to protect the tenants were not effectively implemented and although technically it freed them from bondage they were in reality far from free. They continued to lead near slave-like existence as exploited daily wage workers with no rights over land or any role in deciding wages for their toil. It is this oppressive system that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) openly challenged shaking the very roots of the feudal landlordism. Communist Party had been working in the region from the forties with leaders like V. Srinivasa Rao, P. Ramamurti, V.P. Chinthan and even A.K. Gopalan visiting Thanjavur. The Party itself was so intrinsically identified with the Dalits that it was called the Paraiyan Katchi or 'Party of Untouchables' often derisively by the enemies of the people. The oppressed castes whom the Hindu religion branded as polluting untouchable castes took to the red flag as fish to the water. The derision of the exploiting classes from the higher castes was taken by the Party as recognition of its commitment to its core masses. The Resistance grew and the seeds of rebellion against the oppressive feudal landlordism were sown across the region.

Green Revolution with High Yielding Varieties and resultant rise in productivity of paddy was palpable across the Cauvery Delta. While this brought in prosperity for the landlords, the conditions of those who tilled the land and worked the land remained dismal as ever. The landless peasantry and agricultural workers under the influence of the Communist Party organised themselves for higher wages. The demand grew shriller as paddy prices in the market rose and the workers were unable to feed their families with their meager earnings. The agricultural workers of Thanjavur District formed a Union in 1968 to articulate this main demand and seek for better working conditions. Questioning the caste oppression, corporal punishments, forced labour and illegal exactions, exploitation and discrimination which were unthinkable, now became the norm. The new found courage arising out of organised strength led to open defiance of the feudal lords. Red flags were hoisted on their humble dwellings in many villages across the region. The landlords did not take things lying down. They increased attacks, and organisers of the Party were eliminated to ensure it acts as a deterrent against joining the Agricultural Workers' Union. The landlords organised under the leadership of the notorious Irinjur

Gopal Krishna Naidu and the Nel Utpathiyaalal Sangham or Paddy Producers' Association was formed. Irinjur Gopalkrishna Naidu, the Mirasdar and his family who owned over 210 acres of land and much more in benami holdings was actively involved with the Congress Party according to Sethupathi. Under his leadership the landlords insisted that the red flags be taken down in the villages of Nagapattinam and asked the labourers to hoist the yellow flags of the Paddy Producers' Association.

In the second half of 1968 as the Green Revolution techniques saw increased yields the landlords were raking in huge profits while the agricultural workers were given only five and a half Padi of rice as wages. Padi is a local measure equivalent to one and a half kilogram. So all that they got for their toil in harvest season was 8.25 kg of rice and often even this was denied under different pretexts. It was only natural that the landless agricultural labourers from the Dalit community overwhelmingly came to be organised under the red flag and the agricultural workers' union. They demanded an increase in wages by half a Padi to 6 Padis and the peasantry withheld part of the harvest seeking to bargain for a just wage. The landlords resorted to laying off workers who organised under the red flag. The agricultural workers organised themselves and struck work demanding increase in wages as well as expressing solidarity with the Strike of Central Government workers and against the killing of a CPI(M) activist. Workers were forced to pay a fine of Rs.20/- and only then allowed to resume work. Soon the demands increased; landlords demanded that all forsake the red flag and become members of the Paddy Producers' Association or pay a fine of Rs.250/-. Unprecedented unity of the agricultural workers was exhibited and they rejected these demands of their oppressors. Resilient defiance in the face of extreme repression further angered the landlords. They pushed the landless peasantry into starvation by severely constraining the flow of foodgrains to the local markets. They also resorted to getting labourers from outside the district to work on their land. The association of the landlords started making available labourers from outside to their members. Agricultural Workers' Union resisted this leading to a constant state of conflict in the region. Three leading organisers of the Agricultural Workers Union who were active in the CPI(M) were killed and attacks using police and goons to suppress the rebellion was unleashed. Repeated letters by the CPI(M) leaders to the police authorities and a letter from P. Ramamurti even to the Chief Minister Anna Durai seeking police protection to agricultural workers was met with indifference.

Feudal Model of Shock and Awe

The red flag spread from village to village and organised resistance shook the very foundation of the economic, social and political stranglehold of the landlords. Hardened as they were by age-old oppressive system, the landlords chose violent retribution rather than conciliation. On 25th December, 1968 the landlords resorted to kidnapping of 4 of the organisers of the Agricultural Workers Union namely Muthuswamy, Munian Iyer, Srinivasan and Munian who were kept under forceful confinement and brutally tortured for refusing to stop organising the agricultural workers under the red flag. The agricultural workers mobilised and successfully forced the release of these four comrades of theirs. In the ensuing clash one of the henchmen of the landlords (also claimed labourer brought from outside) named Pakkiriswamy Pillai succumbed to injuries. The fact that the most oppressed castes who were historically forced into submission had raised the flag of revolt sparking of a movement across the region was unacceptable to the feudal landlords. They felt that the rebellion had to be nipped in the bud if their survival had to be guaranteed. Sethupathy narrates that Keezhvenmani was specifically targeted citing this pretext to send a message to all who dare to rebel.

According to him as dusk turned darker by the night the landlords led by Irinjur Gopalkrishna Naidu and henchmen descended on Keezhvenmani in police trucks by around 10 PM and encircled the village leaving almost no scope for escape. Armed with sharp weapons and firearms they attacked randomly and burnt many huts. Two of the landless peasants were shot dead. In the wake of increasing tension with the landlords, the landless had accumulated stones to be used as weapons as a last resort for defending themselves.

In the thick of darkness that was no match for the lethal arms of their oppressors. Some including Sethupathy managed to flee amidst the melee and hide in the nearby paddy fields. He shivers when he recollects what he saw a stone-throw away from Ramaiah's hut situated adjacent to his own dwelling. Women, children and aged had taken refuge in Ramaiah's hut. The attackers had come prepared to burn down the village and the police trucks that brought them to Keezhvenmani were laden with inflammable liquid he claimed. The hut was set on fire heeding neither to the cries of the innocent people locked inside nor to reason. It is now part of folklore that two children thrown out of the burning hut were thrown back by the killers who rejoiced as the fires raged even as they stoked it with hay and dry wood. Six people apparently managed to wriggle out of the burning hut but two of them were hacked to death and thrown back into the burning hut. Sethupathy's brother Nandan in his mid-twenties was one of the survivors and eye-witness to the barbarism. The carnage had led to death of 44 people of whom 16 were women, 23 were children and 5 aged men. All that remains of their charred remains is what was collected by one of the early visitors to the site and is preserved in a small glass case kept at the memorial.

The feudal landlords who led the attack apparently marched to the police station after the heinous act and demanded protection against possible retaliation. While repeated letters seeking protection for the activists of the Party and the Dalit agricultural workers were ignored immediately preceding the massacre the perpetrators of the crime were given ready police protection. The complicity of the police in the entire incident has also been raised by the villagers who pointed to the fact that the attackers were herded in police trucks and brought in a planned manner to Keezhvenmani. The police inaction was clear as they claimed to know of the incident only the morning after, despite the fact that there was a police station in close proximity to Venmani. The act was well planned by the feudal landlords, meant to shock and awe to reinforce their hegemony as well as force them back into submission. The act did shock; it stirred the conscience of people across the State. It also forever put an end to the awe and fears that the oppressed had for the landlords and organisation gave the courage to unitedly fight and emerge victorious against all odds.

Reinforcing Injustice: Media, State and Courts of Law

The Keezhvenmani incident occurred in the second year after the doyen of the Dravidian movement Anna Durai became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. The Dravidian movement had been built around a narrative of fight against oppression and Anna himself had used to good measure films as a media for propagating political views. His first movie *Nalla Thambi* promoted cooperative farming and abolition of Zamindari system. His novel *Velaikari* about a servant maid in 1949 which was made into a movie later were also clearly against oppression of the landlords who were portrayed as aligned with the Congress. The DMK also had come to power by promising 3 measures of rice for a rupee by procuring surplus produce from those holding more than 40 acres and distributing it (*Mythili Sivaraman, 1970*). Ironically, one of the much used couplets in the DMK campaign was addressing the wage question wherein the lament of a widow of a worker who is killed for demanding higher wages caught the imagination of the toiling masses. It goes thus: "*My Love, he asked for a tiny rise (sic.) in wages, My love, he slumped dead with a bullet in his guts!*" (*Mythili Sivaraman, 1970*).

Drawing from the Dravida Kazhagam background and his association with Periyar his writings and rhetoric was also anti-Brahminical. However, in the wake of the Keezhvenmani developments he failed to protect the Dalit workers from attacks and mocked at P. Ramamurthy's call for police protection for them. Ironically an earlier letter written by the Thanjavur District Secretary of the Agricultural Workers Union to him seeking protection was acknowledged in January, days after the massacre. Although he promised action after the massacre and two Cabinet Ministers including then PWD Minister M. Karunanidhi and Law Minister Madhavan visited Keezhvenmani no action was forthcoming. Rather, the DMK seemed unwilling to upset the status-quo and police protection was provided to the perpetrators of the crime although the main accused

were aligned with the Congress. The Government appointed the Ganapathi Pillai Commission to ease the tension between labourers and landlords. However, even as it had just begun its deliberations the landlords threatened to let 8 lakh acres of land lie fallow if they were not granted protection. The Dravidian Party sent large police force to the fields on the pretext of security while the actual intent was to prevent unionisation and agitations by Dalit agricultural workers. The Commission recommended a meager 10 percent increase in wages only which was pittance and did not come near a 'living wage' (*Mythili Sivaraman, 1970*).

The legal battle was also unequal. The Nagai Sessions Court which looked into the killing of Pakkiriswamy Pillai and the Keezhvenmani Massacre simultaneously ruled that the first was not a planned attack while the second was a deliberate preconceived act. In the first case one of the accused was given life sentence and seven others were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for varying periods. In the second case ten of the landlords including Irinjur Gopalakrishna Naidu were convicted for involvement in the massacre and sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment. The Madras High Court which heard both cases upheld the ruling in the first case but quashed the ruling on the massacre. In 1973, the 'learned' judges of the Madras High Court ruled thus:

"... there was something astonishing about the fact that all the 23 persons implicated in the case should be mirasdars. Most of them were rich men, owning vast extent of lands and Gopala Krishna Naidu possessed a car. However much they might have been eager to wreak vengeance on the kisans, it was difficult to believe that they would walk bodily to the scene and set fire to the houses, unaided by any of their servants. They were more likely to play safe, unlike desperate hungry labourers. One would rather expect that the mirasdars, keeping themselves in the background would, send their servants to commit the several offences which according to the prosecution the mirasdars personally committed... The evidence did not enable Their Lordships to identify and punish the guilty" (*Mythili Sivaraman, 1973*).

Ramaiah's hut with 44 men, women and children burnt with cries that Sethupathi says he can still hear but the 'Honourable' Courts literally ruled that those who lit the fire were not aware of the presence of people in that hut. It is also said that questions were raised as to how so many people could huddle together in 8ft X 9ft hut and how was it possible that none escaped. Such insensitivity also points to the caste-class biases that condition even the high echelons of the judiciary.

Many have pointed out the biased role of the media. The sole exception was Theekkathir, the organ of the CPI(M), which alone carried detailed reports explaining the ground realities. Most others did not reflect the oppression, the caste-class dimensions and resistance against feudal landlordism that preceded the incident. It was reported as a conflict between two groups of farmers. This was pointed out by Mythili Sivaraman who noted: "The newspapers had informed us at that time that as labourers persisted in demanding wage increases year after year, the landowners exercised their 'constitutional right' to hire labour from wherever they liked. Outside labour was imported; local labour attacked outside labour; the poor fought the poor. What else could you expect from illiterate, uncultured labourers" (*Sivaraman, 1973*).

Even when the Madras High Court passed the verdict it was only the Left Mass and Class Organisations, especially the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) that marched protesting the injustice. Even the basic act of providing solace to the bereaved families, let alone effecting any tumultuous social transformation was not forthcoming from others said the villagers.

The Legacy of Keezhvenmani Lives On

In 1980, Irinjur Gopalakrishna Naidu was attacked by a group of people and hacked to death. The main accused in this case was a youth in his mid twenties called Nandan. He was one of the eyewitnesses and survivors of the carnage. Sethupathy the eyewitness who narrated the incident to us was Nandan's youngest sibling. The Communist Party and the Agricultural Workers' Union did not merely look at Keezhvenmani

as a wage dispute, it involved the land question and the struggle to end caste oppression. It was a class struggle against feudal landlordism. It was only natural that in the aftermath of the massacre widespread struggles for changing the landholding pattern and fighting caste oppression gained momentum. The Communist Party and the Agricultural Workers' Union became the voice of the struggling masses across Tamil Nadu. The ruling classes were forced to increase wages and land relations had to be altered. The landless Dalit families have become cultivating peasants owning small landholdings. There has been a consolidation of the most oppressed politically around the CPI(M) and the region remains a stronghold till date. The red flag had brought them land, better wages and dignity and ensured they could lead their lives with self-respect said the people of Keezhvenmani. It set in motion processes for social transformation and altered the rural setting as well as land relations by ensuring large-scale redistribution of land. The scars of oppression remain indelible on the minds and bodies of the people of Keezhvenmani. Their struggle and sacrifices ensured better wages and redistribution of land for thousands. It also hit at the roots of feudal landlordism and removed it forever from the high altar that it occupied. The people of Keezhvenmani are like tempered steel, tempered by the struggles and the fire; they shine with a confidence that they can defeat any oppressor with united struggle. Keezhvenmani calls out to all "Let Memories Never Die". (*Slightly abridged from original*)

CTUOs Strongly Opposed 'Code on Industrial Relations Bill'

In a meeting, called by the union labour ministry on 14 September to discuss the 'Draft Code on Industrial Relations Bill' to replace Trade Unions Act, Industrial Disputes Act and Standing Order Act; all 10 central trade unions, in the joint platform of trade unions, have jointly submitted a signed statement opposing the draft Code in totality which is designed to *curb all basic rights of the workers and trade unions, put a virtual ban on right to strike, and introduce a complete "hire & fire regime" empowering the employers to retrench workers at their will in all establishments covering more than 95% of the industrial workforce.* All the trade unions, present in the meeting, opposed the Bill and demanded its redrafting taking into account the trade unions' viewpoints / suggestions.

Participating in the meeting, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, while explaining the issues mentioned in the joint statement, also pointed out that a conspiracy is being hatched both in the draft Code on Industrial Relations Bill and also in the Code on Wages Bill 2017 (already introduced in Parliament) in the definition of the "workers" and "employees". The definition has been so designed as to empower the employers to deprive a substantial section of workforce from the coverage and many provisions of both the Bills; provisions have been made to deprive a section of workers from the coverage terming them as "supervisors," "managers" etc.

Moreover definitions have been so articulated that employers can deprive the "sales promotion employees" and "working journalists and other newspaper employees" from the coverage of the Act. Even the existing provision under section 2(j)(ii)(b) of the Industrial Disputes Act recognizing sales promotion employees as worker has been removed from the Draft Code on IR Bill. Sen demanded to scrap those provisions altogether and redraft the Bill to make it fully inclusive.

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Coal

About 10th Wage Agreement

D. D. Ramanandan

For the first time, all five recognised coal workers federations of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and BMS submitted joint charter of demands on which JBCCI had 9 rounds of discussion during last 8 months. However, as the discussion reached closing stage, the management of Coal India Ltd (CIL) threw a spanner at the instance of central government and coal ministry in particular by bringing in two conditions which are unacceptable to all the unions.

Main Points of the proposed agreement

- Unlike other PSUs, coal workers agreements, including this agreement, are for 5 years.
- There will be 20% minimum guaranteed benefit.
- Increased in allowances is ranging between 15% - 20%.
- Management's contribution to Pension fund, which at present is 1.16% of basic plus D.A., has been increased to 7%.
- Management will contribute 1% in the post retirement medical facilities fund, to be created and run by a Trust having management's and workers' representatives in it.
- On retrospectively effective 10th wage agreement on 01.07.2016, the minimum wage in coal industry will be Rs.30,590; and adding allowances it will become Rs.36,000.
- For Contract Workers following two points have been agreed:
 - A committee will be formed with representatives of the management and the workers for effective implementation of the decisions of the High Power Committee for contract labour; and
 - Another Committee will be formed for wage revision and social security for them.
- On implementation of this agreement the additional financial burden on CIL will be Rs.6,500 crores in the first year.
- This agreement goes beyond DPE guideline.

When both the parties agreed for signing the agreement, at the instance of the government, the management brought two conditions before signing the agreement – one related to providing jobs and the other about weekly off day.

At present there are provisions of employment in four categories, which are not generally observed in other industries. These are - job to dependent (i) of a worker not able to work; (ii) on duty death of worker during mines accident; (iii) death of a worker during tenure of service; and (iv) job to the land loser / dependent. The government wants to end these provisions of jobs, thereby, ending any recruitment in permanent category.

About weekly off day – the government wants it staggering to ensure continuous production.

All central trade unions opposed both the proposals of the management and refused to sign the agreement. The management asked for time up to 18 September, 2017. In case management insists on these two as pre-conditions, the coal federation may resort to countrywide strike.

From the beginning, the coal management was vacillating for holding purposeful discussion on the charter of demands. CITU federation took independent initiative for movement including bringing out procession, staging demonstration and dharna, effigy burning etc. Later, all trade unions together launched movement and served strike notice. Then the JBCCI meeting was convened for discussion. However, workers are restive and angry against management's attempt to put new conditions for wage agreement.

Automobile

Work among Automobile Manufacturing Workers

CITU held a meeting of the unions in the automobile manufacturing sector in Chennai on 17 September attended by the leaders of 12 unions in major multinational automobile manufacturing companies with CITU office bearers - Hemalata, Tapan Sen, A. S. Soundararajan and Meenakshi Sundaram. Hemalata presided and Tapan Sen explained the need to develop a coordinated movement in the sector. A.S. Soundararajan and Meenakshi Sundaram also contributed explaining their experiences while organising the automobile workers.

The meeting discussed the conditions of the workers and decided to make efforts to develop national coordination and countrywide movement of the workers in the sector. Hemalata made the concluding remarks and thanked the Tamil Nadu state committee of CITU for hosting the meeting.

Scheme Workers

Against Attempt of Dismantling ICDS

Countrywide Protests and Burning of Effigies

All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) of CITU condemned the decision of the Government of India to replace freshly cooked meals at Anganwadi centres by packed food and to introduce Direct Cash Transfer. This is accompanied by WCD minister's derogatory comment that Anganwadi ceased to be effective delivery system 20 years back. This statement is contrary to evidence and reports. ICDS earned worldwide recognition for its role in reducing severe malnutrition, bringing down infant mortality rate etc.

All these indicate BJP government's intent to weaken and ultimately dismantle Anganwadi centres and to involve the corporate food giants in the ICDS. It may be recalled that a former Minister for Commerce had invited Pepsico to provide packaged food to Anganwadi centres. Since coming to power the BJP government has been trying to dismantle ICDS by drastic cut in budget allocations and changing funding patterns; replacing freshly cooked meals by take home ration.

Further, jobs of over 26 lakh Anganwadi workers and helpers, all women, mostly from poor and socially oppressed sections will be under serious threat.

AIFAWH called upon the Anganwadi employees to launch countrywide protest and burn government's effigy on 22-23 September.

IT

IT / ITeS Employees Union Formed in Bangalore

Large number of IT and ITeS employees held a meeting at YWCA Hall in Bangalore on 20 August and formed '*Karnataka IT / ITeS Employees Union*'. Veteran trade union leader and CITU state vice president VJK

Nair attended the meeting and guided. The meeting adopted the constitution of the union and resolved to register it under Trade Unions Act, 1926. The meeting also unanimously elected 7 office bearers and 14 other executive committee members with Amanulla Khan as the president, Vineeth Vikal as the general secretary and Sandeep V. R. as the treasurer.

Beedi

7th Conference of AIBWF

The 7th conference of All India Beedi Workers Federation (AIBWF) of CITU was held at Vellore in Tamilnadu on 14–16 September. The conference began with a rally and mass meeting inaugurated by the Kerala labour minister T.P. Ramakrishnan. The meeting was presided over M.P. Ramachandran, president of Tamilnadu Beedi Workers Federation and welcomed by K. Thirusekhar, its general secretary. CITU national leaders A.K. Padmanabhan, A. Soundrarajan, Malathy Chittibabu, were present on the dais apart from the leaders of AIBWF. Ramakrishnan explained the nature of attack and the injustices perpetrated on the vast number of Beedi workers having no fixed minimum wage, PF, pension, etc. Their housing and medical treatments are irregular. The BJP government at the centre is enacting more and more laws making Beedi poor Beedi workers jobless and without creating alternative jobs for them.

Delegate session, held at Comrade Md. Nizamuddin Manch, was inaugurated by A.K Padmanabhan. Debasish Roy placed general secretary's report and statement of accounts by treasurer Paras Basu. 34 delegates from all states participated in the discussion on the reports. After summing up by the general secretary the report and the accounts were unanimously adopted. The delegate session was greeted by Malathy Chittibabu and AITUC state general secretary S. Kashi Viswanathan. The concluding address was delivered by A.K. Padmanabhan. The conference elected a 68 member committee with K.P. Sahadevan as president, Debasish Roy as general secretary and Biman Sanyal as treasurer.



INTERNATIONAL

CITU Delegation Visited WFTU Headquarter

K. Hemalata

Soon after the 15th conference of CITU, World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) extended an invitation to CITU leadership to visit its headquarters in Athens, as per their convenience. Accordingly, a delegation comprising Hemalata, president, Tapan Sen, general secretary and Swadesh Dev Roye, national secretary of CITU and in charge of its international department visited Athens on 5-8 September 2017.

The CITU delegation was received at the airport on 5 September by Anda Anastasaki, general coordinator of the WFTU central office and welcomed at the hotel by George Mavrikos, general secretary and Valentino Pacho, senior leader of WFTU, who briefed about the programmes arranged during the visit.

Incidentally a delegation of South African Trade Unions including Zola Zapetha, general secretary of National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), David Sipunzi, general secretary of National Union of Mines Workers (NUM) and Nkosinathi Theledi, general secretary of Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) along with Michael Makwayiba, president of WFTU were also visiting WFTU headquarters during the same period. CITU delegation also met them.

The CITU delegation visited the WFTU headquarters on the morning of 6 September, presented mementos to the comrades there and held discussions with George Mavrikos. Welcoming the delegation to the WFTU headquarters Mavrikos said that the visit would help in strengthening the common understanding that WFTU and CITU have about the global situation and the conditions of the working class across world. It would certainly help the trade union movement across the world and in India as well he said.

The WFTU general secretary said that the situation in all continents and areas in the world today was complex. The WFTU and its regional committees including its Asia Pacific committee were keenly following these. The analysis of the 17th Congress of WFTU held in October 2016 in Durban in South Africa is proving to be correct. The capitalist class is desperately trying to overcome the global crisis by putting more burdens on the workers. While the working class across the world is trying to resist these attacks, the ruling classes are adopting various methods to weaken working class struggles – by dividing them, isolating them etc. The embassies of different countries are also playing active role by mobilising the migrant workers from their respective countries and isolating them from the mainstream trade union movement.

He explained in detail the efforts being made by the WFTU to develop proletarian internationalism and help organise workers against the capitalist class. Because of these efforts WFTU is gaining and expanding its influence in different countries and continents. One significant development is expansion of WFTU in Africa and its increasing influence in Latin America. A meeting of the leadership of all the Trade Unions International (TUIs) of the WFTU, which is usually held at WFTU headquarters, will be held this year in Kolkata on 9-10 October. WFTU was expanding in all these areas. It is also making serious efforts to become stronger in Europe despite many difficulties. The militant Greek trade union PAME has been given the responsibility for this.

Mavrikos also enlisted the different international programmes planned by WFTU in the coming period. All preparations are being made for the successful implementation of the Action Day on 3 October, focussing on the issues of immigration and refugees. The international pharmaceutical and health conference will be held in Paris on 25-26 October. The conference on young workers will be held in Italy. The WFTU also wants to utilise the centenary of the Great October Revolution to spread its message across world. The preparatory

meeting for the working women's Asia Pacific conference will be held in Vietnam on 6-7 December and the Congress of working women will be held in Panama on 8 March 2018.

Mavrikos requested CITU to send its representatives to all these conferences. Hemalata and Tapan Sen thanked the WFTU for the invitation and briefed about the conditions of workers in India, the initiatives and struggles by CITU and the joint trade union movement. They particularly mentioned the efforts for the massive joint trade union mobilisation on 9-11 November near the Parliament.

The meeting at WFTU headquarters was followed by a meeting with the executive secretariat of All Workers' Militant Front (PAME) the militant class oriented trade union of Greece, led by Giorgios Perros, at its head office. Giorgos Perros briefed the CITU delegation about the attacks by the Syriza government on the workers on the pretext of development and growth. It was trying to make legislations to ban the right to strike and obstruct collective actions by the working class. In the past three years, the wages of the workers were reduced by 40%; more than 10 lakh workers were not getting their salaries for durations ranging from 3 months to 1 year. Workers are being asked to be patient and wait with the promise that conditions would improve in one year. Unemployment crossed 30%; youth unemployment crossed 55%. Workers in different sectors under the leadership of PAME were launching big struggles against such attacks. On 9th September they have planned huge demonstrations in many cities against the visit of the French President who was coming with a delegation of 40 corporate heads. PAME is preparing for another general strike and to intensify the struggle involving more and more people. He also mentioned about the attempts by the ruling classes to rouse anti communist and 'nationalist' feelings among the people to divert their attention from the anti people policies. PAME was preparing the working class to take an internationalist stand in case of imperialist wars. It was also talking to the Turkish trade unions on this issue.

Concluding his presentation Perros said that despite the difficulties in facing the big employers, the government and the unions controlled by the employers and the government, PAME was optimistic that they would succeed based on solidarity. They are inspired by the belief that the future of working class cannot be the barbaric capitalist system and fight to end exploitation of man by man. Capitalism cannot be reformed. It belongs to the past and it has to be relegated to the past.

On 7 September the CITU delegation along with the South African delegation visited the WFTU monument at the municipality of Kaisariani in Athens, erected in memory of the founder leaders of WFTU and paid floral tributes. They thanked the WFTU headquarters for making excellent arrangements for their stay in Athens and arranging for interactions with the trade union and other leaders of Greece.

Extracts from UNCTAD Report on Trade and Development 2017

"...the world economy remains unbalanced in ways that are not only exclusionary, but also destabilizing and dangerous for the political, social and environmental health of the planet."

"...the gains have disproportionately accrued to the privileged few."

"...Austerity measures adopted in the wake of the global financial crisis nearly a decade ago have compounded this state of affairs. Such measures have hit the world's poorest communities the hardest, leading to further polarization and heightening people's anxieties about what the future might hold."

"...Some political elites have been adamant that there is no alternative, which has proved fertile economic ground for xenophobic rhetoric, inward-looking policies and a beggar-thy-neighbour stance. Others have identified technology or trade as the culprits behind exclusionary hyperglobalization, but this too distracts from an obvious point: without significant, sustainable and coordinated efforts to revive global demand by increasing wages and government spending, the global economy will be condemned to continued sluggish growth, or worse."

“The *Trade and Development Report 2017* calls for more exacting and encompassing policy measures to address global and national asymmetries in resource mobilization, technological know-how, market power and political influence caused by hyperglobalization that have generated exclusionary outcomes, and will perpetuate them if no action is taken.” (*Extracts from introductory remarks by Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in the UNCTAD Report on Trade and Development 2017, published on 14 September, 2017*)

WORKING WOMEN

CITU Tasks for Working Women

CITU Working Committee meeting, held in Shimla on 14-16 July 2017, decided the following tasks on Working Women.

1. All CITU state committees should form state Coordination Committee for Working Women (CCWW) within next 3 months and ensure their effective functioning as per the guidelines of the 15th conference of CITU;
2. CITU unions and federations, with women members, should constitute women’s subcommittees to take up specific problems of working women; develop women activists and promote them to decision making bodies;
3. As decided by 15th conference, CCWW and CITU state committees must discuss commission paper on ‘Working women - a class perspective’;
4. CITU state committees should plan campaign on specific demands of working women involving women’s subcommittees of fraternal trade unions and AIDWA;
5. For Implementation of the recommendations of the workshop on sexual harassment at workplace to;
 - (a) Hold similar workshops in states and districts;
 - (b) Joint campaign on sexual harassment at workplace along with the subcommittees of fraternal trade unions – AISGEF, CCGEW, BEFI, AIIEA, BSNLEU etc;
 - (c) Conduct survey on existence of complaint committees in government and public sector; private sector; and unorganised sector;
 - (d) Launch awareness campaign in the offices, factories, establishments and in different organised / unorganised sectors by the affiliated and fraternal trade unions;
 - (e) Include CITU union’s charter of demands the demand for effective mechanisms to prevent and deal with the issue; and
 - (f) Prepare a handbook on ‘sexual harassment at workplaces’ for the activists. on
6. As decided by 11th convention of All India CCWW to:
 - I. Popularise the charter of demands of working women, adopted by the convention, among the widest possible sections of working women; formulate such state and district level demands, conduct signature campaign and submit memoranda to the district administration before September 2017;
 - II. Organise separate state level trade union class for women cadres and for Hindi states (for non-scheme workers) centrally;
 - III. Fulfil quota of circulation of ‘The Voice of the Working Woman’ and ‘Kamkaji Mahila’; depute one person in each state for sending reports for journals and for coordinating circulation.

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

State	Centre	June 2017	July 2017	State	Centre	June 2017	July 2017
AP	GUNTUR	274	276	MHR	MUMBAI	290	293
	VIJAYWADA	277	280		NAGPUR	312	318
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	276	280		NASIK	291	293
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	259	259		PUNE	274	276
	GUWAHATI	244	247		SHOLAPUR	295	296
	LABAC SILCHAR	259	259	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	297	298
	MARIANI JORHAT	241	243		ROURKELA	292	296
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	238	239	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	295	301
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	294	297	PUN	AMRITSAR	276	285
CHD	CHANDIGARH	273	279		JALANDHAR	276	279
CHS	BHILAI	310	311		LUDHIANA	272	276
DLI	DELHI	252	263	RJN	AJMER	257	263
GOA	GOA	298	297		BHILWARA	272	279
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	267	274		JAIPUR	264	274
	BHAVNAGAR	266	269	TN	CHENNAI	263	266
	RAJKOT	270	272		COIMBATORE	267	270
	SURAT	259	263		COONOR	285	287
	VADODARA	259	261		MADURAI	279	284
HRY	FARIDABAD	258	262		SALEM	271	274
	YAMUNANAGAR	272	275		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	286	291
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	250	257	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	296	296
J&K	SRINAGAR	260	263		HYDERABAD	246	250
JRK	BOKARO	276	278		WARRANGAL	286	291
	GIRIDIH	300	306	TRP	TRIPURA	251	254
	JAMSHEDPUR	325	337	UP	AGRA	303	308
	JHARIA	302	307		GHAZIABAD	270	278
	KODARMA	319	326		KANPUR	286	291
	RANCHI HATIA	312	323		LUCKNOW	278	285
KNT	BELGAUM	287	291	WB	VARANASI	277	286
	BENGLURU	286	291		ASANSOL	302	307
	HUBLI DHARWAR	297	301		DARJEELING	256	256
	MERCARA	296	301		DURGAPUR	301	308
	MYSORE	297	299		HALDIA	307	314
KRL	ERNAKULAM	291	294		HOWRAH	269	270
	MUNDAKKAYAM	302	302		JALPAIGURI	268	268
	QUILON	322	326		KOLKATA	264	269
MP	BHOPAL	271	279		RANIGANJ	245	255
	CHHINDWARA	281	287		SILIGURI	256	261
	INDORE	255	261				
	JABALPUR	277	281				
ALL INDIA INDEX						280	285

CITU Journal

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Killing of Gauri Lankesh

Massive Protest Rally in Bangalore

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Bank Employees Protest before Parliament

Against Privatisation & Merger of Banks *(Report page 11)*



CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen addressing the Bank Employees

STATEWIDE KISAN MOVEMENT IN RAJASTHAN

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Huge Kisan Rally at Sikar



Women Volunteers in Red Leading the March



'Funeral' of 'Dead' State Government