



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

Against Anti-farmers Bills & For Peasants Issues



CITU-AIKS-AIAWU national leaders in front of BTR Bhavan in New Delhi on 5 Sept
(Report page 12)



Day-night sit-in by suspended MPs at Parliament premises on 21 Sept
(Report page 19)

In Haryana

11,000 Grameen Safai Karmacharis' Agitation



Though recognised as frontline workers fighting Covid pandemic, the BJP government of Haryana deducted 4 months wage and annual dress allowance of 11,000 Safai Karmacharis across the state taking cover of Covid pandemic.

Against this wage cut and demanding implementation of earlier written assurance of the Chief Minister about wage increase and on other service related issues, thousands of Safai Karmacharis gheraoed the sub-divisional offices in 19 districts across the state on 24 August which was lifted after written assurance of government on meeting the union's delegation next day. Next day, the Dy. CM Dushmanta Choutala and the union's delegation met. Government asked for 15 days time to consider all issues and assured to fix meeting after 15 days.

Recruited as 'volunteers' in 2007, 11000 Safai Karmacharis, all of them Dalits, are organised by CITU in Grameen Safai Karmachari Union Haryana and carrying on powerful statewide movement, beginning in 2009, substantially improving their service and working conditions.

Initially Rs.3525 as honourarium was being paid by the village panchayats. The higher caste and influential panchayat heads forced these hapless Safai Karmacharis for free work at their houses and farms. Because of the movement in 2013 the honourarium was being paid from BDPO office. As soon as BJP came to power, it reverted back the wage payment to panchayats which was, however, withdrawn very next year under pressure of movement including demonstration before the CM and also increasing honourarium to Rs.11,000 plus Rs.3500 as annual dress allowance in 2019.

Calling it insufficient the union again launched agitation and after 18 days strike the Chief Minister issued order for increasing wage to Rs.12500, to bring them under EPF, to issue identity card, Rs.10 lakh accident insurance and norms for ESI coverage. The present agitation is for implementation of this order.

WORKING CLASS**SEPTEMBER 2020****EDITORIAL BOARD****Editor****K. Hemalata****Working Editor****J.S. Majumdar****Members****Tapan Sen****R. Karumalaiyan****Amitava Guha****H. S. Rajput**

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Three Set Ups; Three Formats; Three Unities

In the present phase, there are three organisational set-ups for the working class to carry forwards class and people's movements – all aimed in building and widening the unity of the classes and the masses. They are complementary and not supplementary to each other.

First and foremost is the CITU itself. It must be strong numerically and movementally to carry forward the working class and people's movement in objective direction and, therefore, shall not be counted as one of the many, the One born to lead.

The other is its own class unity through broader trade union unity to reach to its class, the working class, vast section still remain outside trade unions organisation and its movement. A strong all trade unions unity is essential to reach its entire class and bring them in united action. In that context, the unity of central trade unions and federations at national level and more wider in states is pre-requisite to build such unity and united movement with fraternal sense of flexibility and accommodation without deviation from its objective path.

The third set-up is workers-peasants unity, which includes the agricultural workers, to bind the three basic classes producing and building foods, goods and services and creators of national wealth.

The three movemental formats begin with opposition, lifting it to higher level of defiance and then further higher level of resistance. Strike is a powerful weapon of resistance. Simply opposition is not enough. It has to be lifted to the next higher plane of defiance and then to further higher level of resistance.

The three unities encompass its own class unity first; then worker-peasants class unity; and going forward to further broader unity with the people.

In Bihar **Indefinite Strike by Rail Neer Workers**



The contract workers in Rail Neer plant at Khagaul are on indefinite strike and staged demonstration before the railways Danapur DRM office and converted into a public meeting presided over by the General Secretary of Railway Catering & Tourism Workers Union (CITU) Raj Kumar Jha demanding 2 months due wages, bonus, 5 months arrear payment of increased wage, and regularisation of jobs under IRCTC. The meeting was also addressed by CITU state general secretary Ganesh Sankar Singh. A delegation met the DRM and submitted memorandum. Demonstration was staged before IRCTC office at Patna on 31 August.

CITU Greetings

To NEHAWU & Working Class of South Africa

“Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), the class oriented trade union organisation of Indian working class, expresses its solidarity with NEHAWU and the working class of South Africa in their fight for their basic rights at work place. NEHAWU, a member of WFTU, has also demanded universal public health for all South African people as a right.

“CITU fully supports the demands of NEHAWU, of better working conditions, safe work places and personal protective equipment to the frontline workers who are tirelessly working to protect the lives of people from Covid 19.

“It stands with NEHAWU in its fight against the State’s attacks on their fundamental rights of collective bargaining and to strike; and expresses solidarity to their countrywide protest actions on 1-3 September 2020 and national strike on 10th September.

Long Live Working Class Internationalism!
Long Live Working Class Unity and Solidarity!”

Hemalata
President; CITU

Spiralling Increase of Suicides By Daily Wage Workers

‘No to Suicide; Fight Back’

K. Hemalata

RECENTLY published National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report brought into notice the issue of suicide by daily wage workers. The NCRB has started categorising daily wage workers in the ‘Accidental Deaths and Suicides’ data since 2014. Though the number of suicides by daily wage workers has been continuously increasing since then, this was widely covered only this year. Probably the silent revolt of the migrant workers, large number of them daily wage earners, who lost their jobs, incomes and homes and walked home hundreds of kilometres a few months back, made people to pay attention to their plight.

Spiralling Increase of Daily Wage Workers Suicides

According to the NCRB, out of the total 1,39,123 suicides committed all over the country in 2019, 32563 or 23.4%, a little short of one quarter, were by daily wage workers. In 2014, their share was 12% of the total suicides. This has been rising since then – to 17.8% in 2015, - 19.2% in 2016, - 22.1% and – 22.4% in 2017 and 2018 respectively – to 23.4% in 2019. In absolute numbers too, the number of daily wage workers, who committed suicide, has more than doubled between 2014 and 2019.

Suicides by Daily Wage Workers more than Farmers Suicides; Govt’s no concern

Another significant and worrisome fact is the continuous increase in the ratio of suicides by daily wage workers to farmers. Since 2014, NCRB started publishing suicide data for daily wage workers in non-agricultural sector. Even in 2014, more daily wage workers committed suicide than farmers; the ratio in that year was 1.7. This has risen to 2.91 in 2018. That is, for every farmer suicide there were almost three daily wage workers taking their lives.

Suicide by over 3 lakh farmers in 15 years was not a matter of serious concern for the ruling classes and the government. Neither did the corporate media pay much attention to farmers’ distress. Daily wage workers’ suicides are being treated by the ruling classes with much more indifference and apathy.

Low Income Group more Vulnerable

An important feature was reportedly unveiled by collating data in the NCRB. As per reports, it is shown that, though the immediate trigger for suicide may differ, people with lower incomes are more vulnerable to suicide. The annual income of around two thirds of those who committed

suicide was less than Rs.1 lakh. The proportion of those, whose annual income was Rs.5 lakh or more, was less than 5%. This was visible even among the working population. The share of daily wage workers (excluding agricultural workers) out of the total workers including professionals who committed suicide was over 39% in 2014. This increased to nearly 49% in 2018. That is, out of the total workers who committed suicide, around half were daily wage workers. If agricultural workers are also added, this goes up to 44% and 53% respectively.

Suicides among Un-employed

NCRB data also show that the proportion of unemployed in people committing suicide reached double digits for the first time since collecting this data began in 1995. Those who have completed matriculation or secondary school comprise the highest percentage at 23.6%.

Rulers & Society ignoring Suicides by Actual Producers of National Wealth

As already pointed out, the immediate cause for a person to end his or her life may vary. But the fact that people decide to end their lives for whatever the immediate provocation indicates helplessness and lack of faith in society in addition to frustration. What should be of even more concern is that lakhs of toiling people, workers, agricultural workers and farmers, who produce the wealth of the country, are driven into situations of desperation and helplessness where they think ending their lives is the only option. It is a loss not only to their families and friends but to the entire society. It reflects the way a society treats the people who produce its wealth.

But in the present capitalist society, the fact that it is the labour of the workers, farmers and all the other toiling people, which produces wealth, is totally ignored. For Prime Minister Modi and his BJP government, it is the corporates, the capitalists, who sustain themselves by exploiting the workers, whose motive of profit maximisation is the cause for the crisis and the misery of the workers, are 'wealth creators'. Incentives have to be provided for them to invest! Workers are idlers; they must be taught lesson by cutting down their wages, benefits and rights! That is capitalist society; and that is what BJP believes in.

It is further distressing to see the media, the ruling parties and their leaders grab incidents of suicide by some prominent individuals as opportunity to divert attention from causes that drive thousands into ending their lives. Unemployment, job losses, lack of income, poverty, inability to feed their families, inability to repay loans etc, which are questions of life and death to workers and all common people are brushed aside as a small price to advance the so called 'reforms' to protect corporate profits and the capitalist system. Above all neoliberalism promotes helplessness and a sense of isolation by denigrating trade unions and all collective actions.

Not Suicides, Murders by Country's Economic Managers & Rulers

The NCRB data as well as the visuals of the migrant workers marching on the highways and railway tracks, hundreds of them succumbing midway due to exhaustion and accidents show that the distress of the daily wage workers was not only due to the lockdown. They were distressed, pushed to the margins, into precarious conditions even before the lockdown. The sliding economy due to the global economic crisis hit them hardest. The lockdown and the total apathy of the BJP government further worsened their situation.

As per the latest GDP figures, our country's economy has registered a sharp fall of around 24%, the worst among the major countries in the world. But our finance minister and some of her guides and advisors see 'green shoots' sprouting up. Common people, however, are not able to see any 'green shoots' in their lives even in their dreams. Future appears even more bleak to them. Labour laws amended to remove the little protection and welfare benefits available to the workers; cuts in permanent jobs; retrenchments, declining jobs in both urban and rural areas, unemployment, wage cuts, receding access to health and education, indebtedness – this is what stares the workers in their face.

The BJP government stubbornly refuses to provide any succour to the workers and the poor in general. The trade unions, the Left parties and many others have been demanding cash transfer to put some money in their pockets for providing succour to the poor as well as to improve the economy. They have demanded free food grains to all needy.

But the Modi led BJP government, committed as it is to neoliberalism and obedient to the dictates of international finance capital, has totally ignored this. Instead, it is brazenly utilising the lockdown, not for strengthening health infrastructure and improve public health care facilities, but to facilitate exploitation of the people and hand over the country's wealth and resources to the corporates, domestic and foreign; to suppress democratic and constitutional rights to thwart resistance and opposition. It is resorting to witch hunting. Progressive, rational individuals and forces, voices of resistance are being targeted in a bid to throttle all dissent. In addition, along with its mentor RSS and its other outfits, the BJP is fomenting communal polarisation to divert attention from the real issues of the people, divide them on communal and caste lines, disrupt unity and weaken united struggles. It is using its power at the centre to influence all institutions to carry out its communal divisive agenda of 'Hindutva'.

No to Suicide, Fight Back

Despite the lockdown restrictions and difficulties, and the attempts of the BJP government led by Modi to suppress dissent through arrests, false cases and threats, hundreds of thousands have come on to the streets to fight for their demands. Workers and employees in different sectors including contract workers and daily wage workers have been fighting against retrenchments, wage cuts, anti worker labour law amendments and attacks on their basic rights, including by going on strike. Farmers have come together to fight the anti peasant ordinances. Workers, peasants and agricultural workers have come together to fight on common demands.

Strengthening such unity and intensifying struggles and taking them to a level of defiance and resistance is the only way to create confidence among the workers, all sections of toiling people and the common people in general that neoliberalism can be defeated; that pro-people and pro-worker policies can be brought in.

Support and solidarity among all sections of toiling people will drive away desperation, inspire people and create determination to come together to fight. That is the way forward in this situation of multipronged attacks by the ruling classes. Don't despair! Don't take your lives! Let us come together to fight to change our lives! That should be our call to all those who feel themselves helpless and desperate.

227th meeting of CBT of EPFO

Non-Transparent Decision on 'Interest Rates'

A.K. Padmanabhan

227th meeting of the Central Board of Trustees of EPFO was held online on 9 September 2020. This meeting in the present circumstances was held virtually, had limitations creating problems for the participants in various ways. Added to this was the non transparent methods used by the administration in presenting the agenda.

There were 28 items including the confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting, held in March 2020. Notes on these were sent to members in advance. Other than the usual administrative issues there were four or five issues that are of interest or concern of the subscribers and to the employees of EPFO.

Before reporting on the meeting, I shall deal briefly on some of these issues which were brought out through media and caused concern and confusion.

Consequences of Market Investment of EPFO Funds

One such issue was about the market investments of EPFO funds. Since 2015, EPFO is being directed by the Government to invest 5% to 15% of investments in equity and related investments. CITU has been in the forefront in stoutly opposing Market Investment as the experience everywhere had been the high risk to the capital itself. Despite opposition by the trade unions, the government went ahead. Investment started at 5% in instruments which are known as Exchange Traded Fund (ETF). The argument made to satisfy the workers was that these being longtime investments and are based on rated companies, there would be no loss.

As on 31 March 2020, the total holding of ETF was Rs.103,138.60 crores. The investment in 2019-20 alone was Rs.31,501.12 crores. Along with details of investment and holding with EPFO, the performance of these investments as on 31 March 2020 was also given. The average performance of the investment through four institutions was minus (-) 8.29%. That is as the market was down in value as on 31 March 2020; it was 8.29% less than what was invested.

This came out in the media, in their own way of sensationalizing it, creating grave concern among the subscribers. Actually, this was what the CITU and other Tus apprehended and opposed market investment of EPFO funds. And such apprehension has been proved to be correct by these details of "minus" trends leading to erosion of capital invested.

The returns on the total investments are the source of income to EPFO and it is on that basis the interest payment to subscribers are decided. The overall interests have been going down almost every year. The Govt-plea was that, but for market investment interest would have been much less. It is utterly baseless. 85 percent of the corpus of EPF is invested in Govt securities and various bonds. The percentage of investment is as per the directive of the Govt of India.

Non-Transparent Manner EPFO Interest Rate was Reduced in CBT Meeting

In this background, the meeting began on 9 September online with 28 items in the circulated agenda. After 28 items were over in the meeting, suddenly items no.29 and no.30 appeared on the screen. On these no note was made available to the CBT members. However, these two items were not much controversial.

Then, item no.31 was suddenly flashed on the screen, as a bolt from the blue. I was present from the beginning in the meeting and, like others, faced off and on net disconnections. I lost connection completely at 1.05 pm while the discussion was being held on item 30 and I could not get connection at all thereafter. After a few minutes, after contacting another CBT member on phone I came to know that the interest rate was brought in as item no.31 of the agenda.

What was the decision on it? Different persons gave different versions. Media started flashing about reduction of interest rate. Utter confusion prevailed. Prime reason for this was the way the issue of 'interest rate' was brought in most non-transparently, as the last item in the agenda, without prior notice and was rushed through. Even the Labour Minister also, as the chairman of the meeting, while introducing the agenda at the beginning of the meeting did not refer to item no.31 on interest rate!

Immediately afterwards, I sent mail to the EPFO about items nos. 29 to 31 in the agenda protesting the way these were introduced especially the 'interest rate' issue. I specifically asked about what decisions were taken on 'interest rate'. I did not get any response. I tried to contact the senior officers who were in contact for holding of the virtual meeting, but they also did not give any details. Similar enquiries and requests from some other CBT members also did not evoke any response. That was how the tripartite CBT of EPFO, the authority to take decision on the interest rate and other administrative matters, decided EPF interest rate in its meeting on 29 September!

The interest rate for the year 2019-20 was discussed in the CBT in its last meeting held in March 2020. Amid protest and opposition by the trade unions, 8.5% was the proposal and, as is the Rule, it was subject to the approval of the Govt. There was also a decision by the Finance, Investment & Audit Committee (FIAC) that ETF units pertaining to calendar year 2016 will be redeemed within financial year 2019-20 and the income will be transferred to the interest account. No approval of the interest had come from the Govt, however, during this period.

Late that evening, a press release from EPFO, among other things said, "*CBT recommends the same rate @8.5%, comprising of 8.15% from debt income and balance 0.35%(capital gain) from the sale of ETFs subject to redemption by 31st December. It further recommended to account such capital gains in the income of financial year 2019-20 as being an exceptional case.*"

This statement created more confusion. Now markets are down. What if it does not move up? What will happen then? If redemption is made with the eroded value of the capital invested, 0.35% addition may not materialize. The press handout is not specific about it. It may happen that the interest rate would be 8.15% if redemption does not take place as expected!

One other issue related investments is of the 'bonds'. Ratings of few of these establishments had been reduced and EPFO is taking steps to retrieve the money invested.

Some Other Meeting-Related Matters

Trade Union side raised various issues viz. Failure to prepare proper minutes; Issues related to decisions taken but kept pending / unimplemented by the Govt for long; Issues of increasing pension and related issues; issues of Employees of EPFO; The neglect being shown by EPFO towards the problems being raised / taken up by CBT members; Letters not only going un-replied but not even being acknowledged; Difficulties, especially those from unorganised sector, in filing KYC details and because of that not getting advances and settlements etc. Whatever the issues raised, there were difficulties in getting proper clarification as the meeting was on line and disturbances were in abundance. Minister's stock reply to many of these was – "*you put it in writing and send.*"

Attempt to Change EPS to NPS

One major item in the agenda was about the changes in the EPS aiming to change Pension Account individual-based. The argument that the government had put forward was that only through this process, those who invested more can get higher pension.

The fact remains that with such attempt the basic character of EPFO, as a *social security organisation*, would go and EPS would be turned into NPS. Labour Secretary, in reply to my argument against it raising the above referred points, said that if the present system continues poor workers money would be taken to pay to the rich. (He used Hindi words *Garib*, *Amir* to classify workers as 'Poor' and 'Rich') This was of course refuted. As all the TU members were raising voice against it, the minister postponed it till the next meeting saying that would be a physical meeting and a detailed note on this would be made available before that. It is felt that the Govt has decided to go ahead with it once a namesake discussion is held in December. This exposed the game plan of the Govt to convert the EPS into the NPS format.

Increasing EDLI Scheme Benefits

One decision of this meeting was favourable to the workers. The meeting recommended changes in EDLI scheme proposing notification to increase Maximum EDLI benefit to Rs.7 lakhs keeping Rs.2.5 lakhs as minimum benefits. EDLI Benefit is for the family of a subscriber dying while in service. The eligibility criteria of 12 months in the 'Establishment' is being changed to 12 months in 'total,' may be in different establishments.

Benefits to EPFO Employees

For the employees of EPFO, The CPFC, as Chairman of the Welfare Committee, has taken decision to Pay Rs.10 lakhs to the family of any employee in case of death due to Covid 19. Usual payment to a deceased employees' family was Rs.3.90 lakhs. This was informed to CBT and was appreciated.

There was general appreciation of the employees and officers for their work during lockdown period in settling advances sanctioned in view of the pandemic. As on 31 August, advance claims of 35.30 lakhs members has been processed and Rs.9,369.01 crores has been disbursed to EPF members. 685 exempted establishments have been given an amount of Rs.3,127.51 crores to 3,04,681 exempted PF Members up to 31 July.

(A.K. Padmanabhan, senior Vice President of CITU is a Member of CBT)

8.5% is only Assumed Interest Rate of EPF

AS per press report, after exposure of its 'risky investments' in companies including Reliance Capital, DHFL, IL&FS, Yes Bank, Indiabulls, IDFC etc; EPFO is considering 'criminal actions' against these companies for recovery of over Rs.12,800 crores of workers hard-earned money, wrongly invested by EPFO, despite opposition by the trade unions.

Out of 8.5% reduced and notional interest rate this year; 8.15% is actual now. Rest 0.35% will be paid only after assumed recovery from these failed companies and accounted for in the EPF within 31 December 2020. If recovery fails within the stipulated time, this year's interest rate will stand at 8.15% only.

Without Comment

'Fake News' caused Workers Migrating Back Home During Covid-19 Lockdown: Government

THERE were 'gems' in the statements by the Government on the floor of the Parliament on 15 September 2020 in reply to two questions relating to Covid-19 pandemic that;

- *"The migration of large number of migrant workers was triggered by panic created by fake news regarding duration of lockdown, and people, especially migrant labourers, were worried about adequate supply of basic necessities like food, drinking water, health services and shelter."*

- *"The Central government...took all necessary measures to ensure...no citizen should be deprived of basic amenities of food, drinking water, medical facilities etc."*

To another question as to why the government had to resort to a *nationwide lockdown at a notice of just four hours*; the Government made two contradictory statements that;

- *"Soon after the outbreak of novel coronavirus on 7th January, 2020, several measures like progressive tightening travel, issuing advisories for the members of the public, setting up quarantine facilities etc were taken by the central government to contain the spread of COVID-19."*

- *Again, "World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 as pandemic on 11th March, 2020...a nationwide lockdown was announced on 24th March, 2020 to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the country." (Underline adds)*

Worker- Peasant Action Day

5 September 2020

THE 2nd anniversary of historic Mazdoor-Kisan Sangharsh Rally in New Delhi on 5 September 2018 was observed as Workers-Peasants Action Day on 5 September 2020 across the country mainly against the Anti-farmers Bills before the Parliament and on their other burning issues.

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, restrictions on large gatherings, restriction and limitations in physical movements, the Action Day was observed at local levels – at thousands of places; by organising rallies, dharnas, padayatras and demonstrations; with lakhs of people's participation and raising demands with the government through local administration.

Awaiting reports from several other states to add to the available figures; more than 4 lakhs of workers-peasants-agricultural workers and some others joined the Action Day programmes at 13,019 places in 283 districts of 16 States and Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands; Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala in the south; Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal in the east; Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in the west; and Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan in the north.

Continuation of Joint Movement

CITU-AIKS-AIAWU had jointly called upon the workers-peasants-agricultural workers of the country to observe the *Workers-Peasants Action Day* as continuation of earlier joint movements including the *Satyagrah / Jail Bharo* movement of 9 August preceded by 23 July movement both of which had wide response of the people reflecting their growing anger against Modi government's destructive policies in economic, political and social fronts; centralising power under an authoritarian regime; with communal divisive agenda; and its diversionary manoeuvres.

Demands

The movement's demands are – for universal public healthcare especially free tests and treatment for Covid-19; free ration; Rs.7500 per month as income support for six months; 200 days work @ Rs600 and unemployment allowance in MNREGA and urban employment guarantee; - and against Ordinances / Executive Orders on essential commodities, farm trade, Electricity Amendment Act, EIA, NEP 2020, National Digital Health Mission, suspension and altering of labour laws and privatisation of PSEs and services.

Some Statewise Reports

Kerala



Programme, held under Covid protocol, has taken place at 6,014 centres with 48,539 workers participation.

At Trivandrum, the programme was inaugurated at AG office gate by national Vice President of AIKS, S. Ramachandra Pillai. National leader of CITU E. Kareem and of AIAWU State President M. V. Govindan Master addressed the meeting.

Karnataka



Bangalore

Bagepalli Taluku



Dharavada

Ramdurg

More than 1.5 lakh people participated at 256 places in 25 districts.

Tamilnadu



On 5 September the programme was held in 35 districts at 434 centres in 22 districts with 10,225 people's participation. Due to heavy surge of Covid -19 in Tamilnadu the participation of the workers and peasants were very low.

A state level joint meeting of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU was held followed by district-wise such joint meetings. 78,500 leaflets were distributed and 4,000 posters were pasted during preparatory campaign.

Telangana

Worker - Peasant Unity Day was observed at 1,189 centres, in 288 mandals of 34 districts joined by 14,040 persons.

Meeting of the leaders of CITU- AIKS-AIAWU at the state centre was held in Hyderabad on 23 August followed by joint online meetings in districts and online public meetings in 10 districts. National centre's joint circular was translated in Telegu and was circulated through thousands of Whatsapp groups at grass root level.

Andhra Pradesh



Kadapa



Undrajavaram



Kurnool



Nellore

The programme was held at 965 places with 21,565 people's participation across the State.

Preparatory meetings were held by the three organisations together at state and district centres. An online public meeting was held from state centre. 25 round tables were held and 248 press statements were issued. 6,400 pamphlets were printed and distributed and circulated through 44,300 SMS. 3410 placards were physically displayed and sent to 33,463 persons online.

West Bengal

5 September joint programme of CITU, AIKS, AIAWU, on the basis of 16-point demands, was held by organising processions, rallies, sit-ins, road blockades, two wheelers processions at about 950 places in gram panchayats, blocks, city and district centres in all districts in the State with about 1 lakh persons participation.

Local demands were added with central demands and demonstrations were held in terror-hit areas with message to face it by resistance and disobedience.

Protest Day had spontaneous response in all parts of the State including the terror-ridden Jungle Mahal of Medinipur and Purulia districts; from Mathabhanga, Tufanganj of Coochbihar to Kakdwip, Namkhana of South 24 Parganas; in industrial areas of Asansol, Durgapur, Barrackpore and Howrah districts; at Kolkata and Haldia port areas; agricultural areas of Memari in Burdwan, Balagarh, Pandua in Hooghly, Murshidabad, Nadia and Birbhum districts; and tea gardens in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Alipore districts.

Preparatory joint meetings of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU were held in all districts.

Jharkhand



Dhanbad



Jamshedpur

5 September *Workers-Peasants Action Day* was joined by 4,318 persons including 3306 peasants and 1012 workers in 33 blocks in 18 districts of the State.

In Kolhan region, the programme was held at Golmuri by the trade unions; at Kakidih village in Borham block jointly by Kisan Sabha and trade unions; and holding padayatras at Sakchi by the trade unions. In Dhanbad the programme was organised in front of union office at Jagjivan Nagar.

Bihar



Patna



Samastipur

5 September *Workers-Peasants Action Day* was jointly organised by CITU-AIKS-AIAWU by holding rallies and demonstrations with flags and banners concluding in impressive public meetings, with wider participation and appreciation of the people, at 365 places in towns and rural areas in 35 districts across the State. At 17 places PM's effigy was burnt.

Under CITU banner about 73,000 workers participated while in almost equal number agrarian masses participated under Kisan Sabha and Khet Mazdoor Union banners. Bank, insurance and state government employees' participation in this programme was appreciable at most of the places.

Madhya Pradesh

The Action Day was organised by CITU at one place in the capital city of Bhopal with 25 participants; 80 members brought out rally in Guna and submitted memorandum to the collector; in coal areas 250 workers in Meera mine and 400 workers in Baratrai mines staged demonstrations.

Kisan Sabha staged demonstrations in Rewa, Bhind and Anupgarh with about 100 kisans participation.

Maharashtra



Talasari in Palaghar



Solapur

In the *Workers-Peasants Action Day*, 24,227 workers-peasants-agricultural workers participated at 719 centres in 67 tehsils of 21 districts across the State with AIDWA, SFI, DYFI and AARM members joining in several districts.

In terms of mobilisation, first 6 districts were Solapur with 12,212; Thane-Palghar - 5,641; Nagpur - 1204; Nasik - 1,100; Mumbai - 687 and Amravati - 647 participants.

Uttar Pradesh



Bulandshahr



Anpara in Sonebhadra



At two places in Varanasi district

Workers-Peasants Action Day on 5 September was organised in the State in which CITU members participation was 94 in Kanpur; Allahabad – 54; Jaunpur – 95; Moradabad – 15; Ballia – 75; Bareilly – 15; Gonda – 55 and Lucknow – 65. Programme was also successfully organised in Varanasi, Bulandshahr, Firozabad and Sonebhadra districts. Kisan Sabha and Khet Mazdoor Union members also joined in large number in almost all places.

Uttarakhand



A rally was brought out from CITU office in Dehradun and staged demonstration in support of workers and peasants demands.

Himachal Pradesh

On the Action Day, workers and peasants' joint demonstrations were staged at 29 places in 7 districts of Shimla, Hamirpur, Mandi, Kullu, Kinnaur, Kangra and Chamba with 1,356 persons participation.

Rajasthan



Sriganganagar



Bhilwara



Workers-peasants joint rally



at industrial area

In Jaipur

The Workers-Peasants Action Day was organised at 28 places in 7 districts of Sriganganagar, Hanumangarh, Sikar, Jaipur, Kota, Jhunjhunu and Bhilwara and by Roadways union with 2,699 total participants. In this, the noteworthy participation was 1,496 persons at 9 places covering 62 villages in Hanumangarh district.

Punjab



Despite strict prohibitory orders and lockdown, there was good response to the joint call of Workers-Peasants Action Day in all 22 districts of the State. Over 2,000 villages were covered during jatha march and also in all industrial centres. The villages were covered by the state level MNREGA Mazdoor Union, Lal Jhanda Punjab Bhatha Mazdoor Union, Lal Jahanda Pendu Chawkidars Union, Anganwari Muljam Union, Bharat Nirman Mistri Mazdoor Union etc with 15,000 workers participation.

In Mansa district police resorted to lathi-charge injuring CITU state vice president Kulwinder Singh Udat and several local leaders and also arresting them under false charges.

Farmers' Voice in the Parliament

MPs Suspended Opposing Anti-Farmer Bills

"Dark day for Indian Democracy; Sabotaging of Parliamentary procedures; We MPs were denied with our right to vote on a Bill; Govt feared defeat as opposition united for the farmers; We were manhandled and our voices were not heard; Shame on this Government," Twitted CITU national Secretary and its Kerala state General Secretary Elamaram Kareem after he along with seven other MPs were suspended from Rajya Sabha till the end of the current session by its chairman Venkaih Naidu. Naidu also rejected the no confidence resolution against dy. chairman Harivansh.

CITU's Kareem and AIKS national Joint Secretary K. K. Ragesh, both CPI(M) members of Rajya Sabha, along with six other opposition MPs of TMC, Congress and APP were suspended on Monday, the 21 September, by its chairman over a situation in the House earlier on Sunday for strongly opposing the passing of the anti-farmers bills and not leaving the House despite asking by the newly elected deputy chairman Harivansh.

The two anti-farmer legislations are - the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020.

The opposition's suggestion to send the bills to a select committee for review; extension of the discussion and physical voting – all were turned down by the dy. chairman and the bills were passed by voice vote. The manner in which bills were passed on Sunday was "murder of democracy", said the opposition.

Day-Night Sit-in by Suspended MPs

Later on Monday itself, all suspended MPs, including Kareem and Ragesh, staged a day-night sit-in near the Gandhi statue in the Parliament premises. Several opposition MPs expressed solidarity by attended at the dharna place. "We will fight for farmers" and "Parliament assassinated" – they raised slogans. The MPs spent the night on the lawns of the parliament building before joining other opposition leaders to walk to President Ram Nath Kovind's official residence to bring his attention to the issue.

"Suspension won't silence us. We will stand with farmers in their fight. Dy. Chairman throttled Parliamentary procedures yesterday. Suspension of MPs exposed the coward face of BJP. People will see through the attempt to divert attention from their undemocratic actions," Twitted Kareem.

On Revision of Pension under PF Pension Scheme, 1995

Raising the issue in Rajya Sabha on 18 September, E. Kareem said that there is a long pending demand of about 65 lakh pensioners in the country for the revision of pension under EPS 1995. At the time of introduction of the EPS, 1995, the trade unions and the pensioners had opposed the scheme since the pension benefits are less compared to the contributions. Their just demand was supported Kerala High Court and was also upheld by the Supreme Court. But, so far, the Government has not implemented the recommendations. Kareem urged the chairman to take up the matter with the Government.

Against Privatisation

BPCL workers' 2 Days Nationwide Strike

Countrywide Solidarity Actions



Assam



Jharkhand



Andhra Pradesh



Bihar



Uttarakhand



Chhattisgarh

AT the joint call of their unions, BPCL workers resorted to 48 hours strike on 7-8 September 2020 in all establishments - refineries, bottling plants, marketing outlets of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) across the country against Modi government's move to privatise it.

In a congratulatory statement, CITU said that the strike was *"against the destructive and disastrous move of the BJP government to privatise BPCL and hand over the profit making company to the chosen private hands."*

The workers strike was total in the BPCL Kochi and Mumbai refineries on both days. Most of the BPCL LPG bottling plants in eastern, north-eastern and in northern India were virtually shut down. In the BPCL marketing establishments / outlets in northern and eastern India and, to a great extent, in western India came to grinding halt on the both days.

Strike in Kochi Refinery: Despite the management obtaining prohibitory order against the strike from Kerala high court, the workers of BPCL Kochi refinery were on total strike jointly led by Cochin Refinery Workers Association (CITU), Cochin Refinery Employees Association (INTUC), Refinery Employees Union and BPCL Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). Total 1470 workers of the Kochi Refinery, except workers on essential duties, remained on strike on both the days completely shutting the operation of the plant. The unions jointly organised virtual rally on 6 September addressed by Elamaram Kareem MP, Benny Behanan MP, Kodikkunnil Suresh MP, Suresh Kurup MLA, V.P. Sajeendran MLA, C K Manisamkar, Madhukumar (BMS) and the unions' leaders. Meetings at Refinery gate were held on both days inaugurated by CITU national leader K. Chandran Pillai on the first day and by K. Babu on next day.

Management issued show-cause to the striking workers for penal deduction of 8 days wage.

Defending the national asset

BPCL was formed by taking over a multinational company in 1976 by the Act of the Parliament. After BPCL became an oil PSU, it hugely augmented its refining capacity, network of LPG terminals / bottling plants and expanded its marketing network across the country through huge public investments creating and expanding its asset base of more than Rs.9.5 lakh crore of national property.

Earlier also, in 2002-03, there was a move by the then BJP government to privatise BPCL. However, that attempt was successfully foiled by BPCL workers through their united struggles including 3 days strike with solidarity and support by the entire petroleum sector workers.

The same BJP government is now hell bent to hand over this consistently profit making company to its chosen private player through strategic sale route, almost at a throw away price (may be around Rs.60,000 crore) despite the fact that BPCL has been regularly and handsomely contributing to national exchequer through dividend and taxes.

The very idea of privatizing BPCL is against the national interest and designed for handing over the monopoly control of petroleum sector to the particular private corporate player of its choice, CITU said.

Solidarity Actions

There were widespread solidarity demonstrations throughout the country, particularly by the petroleum sector workers. All central trade unions and national federations have also extended their full support to BPCL workers strike.

Andhra Pradesh: About 400 workers of PSUs staged demonstration in front of their respective establishments in **Vizag** in solidarity with the striking BPCL workers. Other 393 workers participated in solidarity programme at 14 centres on highways near residential areas. Public Sector Coordination Committee printed and distributed 17,000 leaflets.

Bihar: Solidarity programme with BPCL striking workers was organised at **Patna** jointly by CITU, AITUC, AICCTU, AIUTUC, UTUC, TUC and other unions. At main city centre, Dakbanglow Chowk, one hour protest demonstration cum dharna was staged as the police did not allow dharna demonstration in front of BPCL office. The programme was covered by different print and electronic media. More than 1000 people participated. At **Begusarai** huge demonstration and gate meeting were organised in front IOC refinery office at Barauni. All CTUs participated, from CITU participation was 559 workers. At **Samastipur**, huge protest demonstration was staged on 8 September in which 456 workers of CITU participated.

Madhya Pradesh: In Jamuna Kotma Collieries 5 & 6 on 7 September and in 9&10 next day, coal workers staged demonstrations in support of striking BPCL workers. BHEL workers staged solidarity demonstrations and held meeting at its foundry gate in Bhopal.

Assam: Solidarity action took place at 3 industrial centres in 3 districts.

(Reports from other states are awaited)

Workers Growing Resistance against Privatisation of National Assets

BPCL workers' 2 days strike was preceded by a 3 days total strike by coal workers in July last against the same destructive attempt of privatisation. Defence employees in Ordnance factories etc are going for indefinite strike beginning on 12 October against Modi government's move of privatisation of defence production.

These are pointers towards working class developing resistance struggle in defence of national assets and country's natural resources.

CITU called upon all progressive and patriotic sections of the people to oppose BJP government's measures to hand over national wealth to their corporate cronies, and support the workers' struggles against such attempts.

Half Crore Net Jobloss of Salaried People In Just One month - July 2020

NET jobloss of salaried people was nearly 5 million in just one month – July 2020, said CMIE (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy) in its report published in *Economic Times* of 20 August 2020.

Total number of joblosses of the salaried people since the beginning of lockdown, in March end, to July end was 18.9 million. Most worrisome, however, is that it is ballooning. Recovery rate in overall employment is mostly in informal sector.

"While salaried jobs are not lost easily, once lost they are also far more difficult to retrieve. Therefore, their ballooning numbers are a source of worry," CMIE cautioned. Salaried jobs were nearly 19 million (nearing 2 crore) less compared to the last financial year 2019-20.

It is estimated that only 21% of all employment in India is in the form of salaried employment. As a result, job losses among them accounted for only 15% of all job losses in April. But, it galloped to nearing 50% of net jobloss in July.

CMIE had earlier estimated 121.5 million jobs were lost in the first month of the lockdown in April. This loss narrowed down to 100.3 million in May which further narrowed down significantly to 29.9 million in June and now to 11 million in July.

CMIE report also states that the recovery in jobs reflects to a great extent lifting the cessation of practically all economic activities after April. Perhaps it also reflects the desperation of Indians to get back to 'some employment', even in informal jobs by salaried people, who lost jobs. Perhaps, it also reflects the desperation of Indians to get back to some employment after a rather prolonged involuntary break, it said.

25,000 IT Employees retrenched during lockdown

During Covid-19 pandemic more than 25,000 IT and ITeS employees have been retrenched in different parts of India by multinational IT giants in gross violation of labour laws and Government's directions against it. These companies include Cognizant, Wipro, Hexaware, Capgemini, Accenture and others. This loss of jobs is based on the recent quarterly reports of these companies as reported in print media in August 2020.

Neither the profit and nor the revenue collection of these IT giants have not gone down due to pandemic. On the contrary, in some section business is growing. Despite profit and good revenue earning these companies resorted to retrenchment of the employees in the name of cost-cutting, growth plan and performance appraisal.

The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment remained mute spectator to such retrenchments against its own guideline and in gross violation of the labour laws, IT Sector employees unions pointed out; raised demands to the Central and State Governments for urgent intervention and expressed determination to fight back.

Central Trade Unions Call

Raise United Agitation in Newer Heights Nationwide Militant Protest on 23 September

THE joint platform of the Central Trade Union organisations (CTUs), in their meeting of 31 August, resolved to intensify workers united agitations to newer heights by organising Nationwide Militant Protest on 23 September 2020 pursuing 35 point demands.

CTUs also underlined the need to prepare for nationwide strike in future.

The CTUs also gave call to extend support to BPCL strike, held on 7-8 September 2020; and solidarity action on 12 October, the beginning day of indefinite strike of Defence employees; and to hold virtual national convention of PSUs on 28 September to plan for their united actions.

The CTUs statement pointed out the background of this heightening movement from Opposition to Resistance for the campaign among the masses about -

- Government's aggressive moves - to suppress and alter labour rights legislations through executive orders / Ordinances; - disinvestment/privatisation of central and state public sector including vital financial sector, railways, defence, steel, petroleum, electricity etc;
- Continuing job losses; wage cuts; forced premature retirements of government and CPSE employees; DA-DR freeze etc;
- Anti-people changes in the management of agriculture and farm trade and virtual abrogation of Essential Commodities Act through Ordinances;
- Attacks on the democratic rights of working masses and the other sections of the society against national interest.

The CTUs statement graphically narrated the worsening situation of the nation and its people as background of the struggle including –

- Indian GDP gone down to (-)23.9% topping the list of the nations: UK (-) 20.4%, France (-)13.8%, Italy (-)12.4%, Canada (-)12%, Germany (-) 10.1%, USA (-) 9.5%, Japan (-)7.6% and China (+)3.2%;
- Unemployment rate in 2019 being worst in 45 years and rising with a speed never seen before;
- CMIE and other studies revealing on the one side continued increase in profit of the corporates in totality; and on the other side worsening situation of unemployment, wage depression and cuts, adverse impact on women employment, jobloss, growing precarious working conditions at work sites;
- Rising depression and anxiety specially amongst the younger generation, being the largest percentage of job losers, the businesses and industry employing workforce between 30% to 50% only; highly qualified youngsters seeking semi skilled or unskilled jobs for survival; semi skilled have also entered into unskilled job profiles and the space for unskilled workers is shrinking;

- The urban poor like street vendors, waste recyclers, rickshaws pullers, drivers, head loaders, porters, domestic workers etc have been put into extreme distress receiving no attention from the Government;
- Child labour showing rising trend reflecting the hunger and no-cash at home as a ground reality;
- Violence against women and children also increasing including domestic violence.

The CTUs pointed out that the Government is totally in denial mode and twisting the facts to paint a picture of normalcy and that the economy in full scale reviving mode;

- The fraudulent 20 lakh crores revival package in the name of relief to poor, not even 1% of it flowing down to common man; actual expenditure from exchequer in that package is only 1.5% of GDP as against the government claim of 10%, 8.5% of this 10% is actually loans with government guarantees;
- Another set of package is forthcoming which would further fill the coffers of big corporates of India; more attack on small sector and the local and indigenous businesses and the common people;
- During this period of Covid pandemic the wealth of big corporate houses has been rising with Mukesh Ambani increasing his wealth by 35% from April onwards;
- PM Modi has already taken a U-turn on the question of promised 2 crore new job creation every year, now proclaiming to encourage the youth not to be job seekers but to be job creators;
- Government is literally killing the MSME sector, the farmers and those in the agri-based activities and co-operative sector which are the sectors for majority of employment and livelihood generation for the people;
- The sufferings of front rank pandemic fighters – the doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, Safai Karmacharis, Asha and Anganwadi workers etc continue to rise with every passing day with the Government remaining stubbornly negative on their basic entitlements related demands.

It is in this background, the growing sufferings of the masses found reflection in the massive response to the call of CTUs in the 9 August, the Quit India Day, to observe as 'Save India Day' becoming historic with workers and farmers on the streets across India. 18 August was also observed with the slogan of 'Save Public Sector' - 'Save India' by the unions.

The CTUs and federations also noted with enthusiasm about the rising militant struggles in numerous industries and sectors, both organised and unorganised, reflecting increasing determination to combat and resist including 3 days strike in coal; 2 days strike in BPCL; decision of indefinite strike by defence employees; strikes and agitations by ASHA and Anganwadi workers in many states; militant agitations including strike in various private sector industries in cement, engineering etc in many states.

Instead of taking cognizance, Modi Govt., not only used its home dept. to file FIRs against agitating masses, but arrogantly announced to carry forward its policies of selling the national assets and natural resources.

In this background it became imperative for the CTUs to raise the pitch of opposition and heighten the same to the level of resistance. CTUs underlined the need to prepare for nationwide workers general strike in future.

Demands

1. Free universal healthcare for all;
2. 10kg Free food grains per person per month to all needy for 6 months;
3. Rs.7500 per month for all non tax- paying families for next six months;
4. 200 days work in MNREGA @ Rs600/- as wages per day or unemployment allowance;
5. Enact and implement urban employment guarantee;
6. Rescinding the Ordinances/executive orders on Essential Commodities, Farm Trade, Electricity Act and Labour Laws', EIA and National Digital Health Mission;
7. Free tests and treatment for Covid-19;
8. Jobs or unemployment allowance;
9. Withdraw NEP 2020;
10. No Privatisation of PSEs and Services;
11. Safety gear and PPE to all Front line workers including ASHAs, Anganwadi employees, NHM workers etc on Covid 19 duty;
12. Rs.50 Lakhs Insurance, Risk allowance, Compensation, free treatment for all frontline workers - ASHA workers, Anganwadi Workers NHM Workers etc – on Covid -19 Duty;
13. Implement the recommendations of 45th and 46th ILC for regularization of scheme workers as workers; Pay minimum wages Rs.21000 per month and pension Rs.10000 per month; Provide ESI and PF to all scheme workers. Pay pending Wages;
14. Withdraw the proposals for privatization of basic services including health (including hospitals), nutrition (including ICDS and MDMS) and education;
15. Stop Privatisation of PSEs and Services;
16. Increase the budget allocation for Central Schemes, Free Health Services to all;
17. No Increase in Working hours from 8 to 12 hours;
18. Urgent measures for containing price-rise through universalisation of public distribution system and banning speculative trade in commodity market;
19. Containing unemployment through concrete measures for employment generation; Link Employment protection with stimulus packages;
20. Strict enforcement of all basic labour laws without any exception or exemption and stringent punitive measures for violation of labour laws;
21. Universal social security cover for all workers;
22. Assured enhanced pension of not less than Rs.10,000 p.m. for the entire working population;
23. Stoppage of contractorisation of permanent and perennial work and payment of same wage and benefits for contract workers as regular workers for same and similar work;
24. No fixed term employment in any sector;
25. Removal of all ceilings on payment and eligibility of bonus, provident fund; increase the quantum of gratuity;

26. Compulsory registration of trade unions within a period of 45 days from the date of submitting application; and immediate ratification of ILO Conventions C87 and C98;
 27. No FDI or Privatisation in Railways, Insurance and Defence;
 28. Remunerative price for the farmers at C2+50 as per Swaminathan Committee recommendations;
 29. No forcible acquisition of land; effective implementation of the Land Acquisition Act 2013;
 30. Waving farmers loans, particularly of small and marginal farmers; urgent drought relief; protection and promotion of animal husbandry chain;
 31. Against removal of kerosene oil and sugar from the public distribution system;
 32. Ensure safety for women at workplace; constitute complaints committees against sexual harassment at all work places and in areas for the unorganised workers;
 33. Provide separate toilets and rest rooms for working women; six months paid maternity leave for all women workers; crèches in all establishments where women are working; equal wage for women workers doing the same or similar job as men;
 34. Reservation in private sector;
 35. Effective measures to stop caste discrimination and social oppression, atrocities against dalits and minorities.
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Sardar Watching

Security Guards Protesting for Wage



The 70 security guards, deployed to provide security to Rs.3000 crore statute of Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel in Ahmadabad, have been forgotten by the administration to pay their wages for several months now. The security guards have been in agitation for due wages standing in silence for 4 hours at a stretch in scorching sun.

Workers to Join Peasants and Agri -Workers in ***'Rail Roko' – Rasta Roko'* on 25 September**

THE National centre of CITU, in a very short time notice available to it, through statement, circular etc of 19 September, has made efforts to galvanise its entire organisational network across the country and reach to the workers at shop floors, work places and residential areas to express full support to the urgent demands of the peasants and agricultural workers for withdrawal of BJP government's anti-farmer and anti-people Ordinances on agricultural produce, now the Bills before the Parliament, favouring corporates in agricultural trading; and against the anti-people and anti-farmer Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 and on other burning and long pending issues of the farmers being vigorously pursued by over 200 farmers organisations' national platform – the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC);

And calling upon all workers, in and outside CITU, to join in the solidarity actions by joining, wherever possible at local level, the AIKSCC led countrywide powerful 'Rail Roko, Rasta Roko' resistance agitation; and also to stage massive solidarity demonstrations and hold public meetings in city / towns / urban areas on 25 September 2020.

- The three anti-farmer anti-people Ordinances/Bills are aimed at complete restructuring of agricultural economy;
- Curbing the Essential Commodities Act and related anti-hoarding, anti-black-marketing regulations;
- Virtually withdrawing government's role in ensuring fair and remunerative prices for farmers' produce;
- Paving way for ultimately doing away with government's procurement of agricultural produce with minimum support price system;
- Totally favouring Farm Trade in favour of a nexus of landlords, big corporates and multinational trading cliques on agricultural produce;
- Promoting contract farming at the dictated terms and of prices by the big landlord-corporate-MNC trading cliques with monopoly power over agriculture and its produce;
- Aiming to facilitate cronies for profiteering by big players like Adani, Wilmar, Reliance, Walmart, Birla, ITC etc and also the large trading companies, both foreign and domestic; and

Leading to -

- Virtually killing the rights and entitlements of the agricultural population;
- In totality, peasant-agriculture will be totally ruined, on which survival of more than 60% India's is dependent;
- Also severely affecting non-agricultural populations endangering their food security;

Central Trade Unions Raised Objections

On **Government's Proposed Formula of Fixing Base Year of Dearness Allowance**

IN response to Union Labour Ministry's letter to Central Trade Unions (CTUs) seeking their opinion on the proposed formula of fixation of new base year for calculation of Consumers Price Index (CPI) for the Working Class; the CTUs, in their joint reply of 25 August, raised certain objections and underlined four specific points.

The CTUs objected to short time given to CTUs for response; and also for not having prior consultation with the trade unions prior to giving proposal indicating attitude of the Government to observe only formality and making mockery of bipartism/tripartism.

As their immediate response, the CTUs recorded their views -

1. On Government's proposal of 2016 as the new Base Year:

The CTUs pointed out that (i) the website of Labour Bureau itself mentioned that the work was going on with 2013-14 as the new Base Year. Why then suddenly 2016 is being proposed as the new Base Year? (ii) It is because the Demonetisation shock of November 2016 had sharply brought down price levels of the items in the basket in the last quarter of that financial year. For this, CTUs referred to the Minutes of the 64th meeting of TAC on SPCL dated 22.10.2018. (iii) Hence prior consultation with trade unions is absolutely essential on this.

2. On Methodology:

Prices available in the Public Distribution System (PDS) for food items in the basket are considered for calculations. But, the strata of workers, for whom the CPI Series is being worked out, is not eligible to get any items in the PDS (income level more than Rs.1,00,000 per year). Therefore prices in the open market only should be considered.

3. Linking Factor:

The proposed Linking Factor of 2.88 to convert numbers in 2016 series to 2001 series equivalent is low. The linking factor for 1982/2001 (gap of 19 years) is 4.63 and for 1960/1982 (gap of 22 years) is 4.93. Therefore, for 2001/2016 (gap of 15 years), it should be in the range of 3.5.

4. Sectors for Inclusion:

While Handloom and Construction sectors are being considered for inclusion; the Loading/Unloading should also be included.