

The Voice of the Working Woman

*“Kisan Sabha in Every Village,
Every Kisan in Kisan Sabha !”*



**Clarion Call of the
34th Conference of the
All India Kisan Sabha**

Towards Historic 3 Day Relay Dharna before Parliament 9,10,11 November 2017

The working class in the entire country is preparing for a show of strength in the mass mobilisation on 9,10,11 November 2017 in the 3 Day Relay Dharna before Parliament at the call of the Central Trade Unions and Independent Federations. State level joint conventions were conducted in almost all the states. The entire festival season was observed by leafletting, gate meetings, jathas, local mobilizations, etc both independently and jointly by the trade unions. The mobilisation is on this 12 point Charter of Demands

1. Urgent measures for containing price-rise through universalisation of public distribution system and banning speculative trade in commodity market
2. Containing unemployment through concrete measures for employment generation
3. Strict enforcement of all basic labour laws without any exception or exemption and stringent punitive measures for violation of labour laws.
4. Universal social security cover for all workers
5. Minimum wages of not less than Rs 18,000 per month with provisions of indexation
6. Assured enhanced pension not less than Rs.3,000/- p.m. for the entire working population
7. Stoppage of disinvestment in Central/State PSUs and strategic sale
8. Stoppage of contractorisation in permanent perennial work and payment of same wage and benefits for contract workers as regular workers for same and similar work
9. Removal of all ceilings on payment and eligibility of bonus, provident fund; increase in the quantum of gratuity.
10. Compulsory registration of trade unions within a period of 45 days from the date of submitting application; and immediate ratification of ILO Conventions C 87 and C 98
11. Against Labour Law Amendments
12. Against FDI in Railways, Insurance and Defence

The Voice of the Working Woman

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Where are ‘*acche din*’ for the Working People?

Three and half years of BJP rule under Prime Minister Modi have shattered people’s illusions.

The youth who hoped to get decent jobs are disillusioned. The 2 crore new jobs every year, promised by Modi before the 2014 Parliament elections, are nowhere in sight. Instead, the number of jobs is coming down. Data shows that India’s working age population increased by 4.66 crores between 2011 -12 and 2015-16. But the number of those who were actually working increased by only around 1.1 crore. 1.2 crore people look for jobs every year. But around 1 crore of them fail to get any job. Most of the jobs that the rest manage to get can in no way be termed ‘decent’ jobs. A large number of them are compelled to work for very low wages as they cannot afford to be unemployed. A Labour Bureau report shows that in 2015-16 39% did not get work throughout the year. In the rural areas 48% could get work for a part of the year only. Over and above this, a study by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy shows that over 15 lakh people lost their jobs during the first half of 2017 alone.

Industrial production is hardly growing, indicating that there is little scope for job creation in the manufacturing sector. Private investment is stagnant. Share of exports is reported to have declined to a 14 year low. RBI has cut down its growth forecast. State Bank of India said the slowdown in the economy is ‘*not short term in nature or even transient*’.

The workers and employees who believed ‘*acche din*’ would come with Modi are disillusioned. Wages have either remained stagnant or are declining. The BJP government has intensified the onslaughts on workers’ rights. It has finalised the Bills to snatch away their basic rights – right to association and collective bargaining, their right to strike, to promote ‘ease of doing business’ for the capitalist class. The government wants to turn the workers into slaves.

‘*Acche din*’ have certainly not come for the toiling people. Not for the workers, not for the unemployed youth, not for the peasants. The country witnessed suicides of over 3 lakh farmers during the last two decades. Now it is witnessing suicides by unemployed youth in different parts of the country.

This is the outcome of the neoliberal policies that successive governments at the centre have been pursuing during the last twenty five years. Despite all the claims of ‘strong fundamentals’ and the rising share market indices, the burdens on the common working people have increased. The impact of the systemic crisis of capitalism, which has been persisting since around a decade is impacting our country too. The big corporates, from our country or foreign countries, are trying to come out of the crisis, to protect and increase their profits by shifting the burden on to the working people, by attacking their rights and their unity.

To achieve ‘*acche din*’ for all working people, what is required is reversal of the neoliberal policies and change of the system itself. This requires united struggles of all sections of toiling people, the workers, peasants, unemployed youth and the socially oppressed sections.

The Voice of the Working Woman believes that the ‘Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan’ comprising organisations working among all these sections will function as a powerful weapon in the hands of the toiling people in their struggle against neoliberal policies and the communal, divisive and disruptive forces led by the BJP and its mentor RSS today.

On the Slowdown in GDP Growth: More to the Tale than is Evident

Surajit Mazumdar

In the last month, the mood about the state of the Indian economy has evidently taken a turn for the worse even among those who have been active votaries of the neo-liberal economic policy agenda that goes by the name of 'economic reforms'. Two finance ministers from opposing political formations, Yashwant Sinha and P. Chidambaram, have made extremely harsh statements about the government's handling of the economy. These two gentlemen are those who between them put one of the ultimate expressions of a neo-liberal outlook, namely the FRBM Act 2003, into the statute books. The former piloted the Act through the Parliament towards the end of the Vajpayee government's tenure while the latter notified it on 5 June 2004, soon after the UPA-I government came to power. That Yashwant Sinha chose to publicly put his weight behind the view that the economy is in the doldrums despite being a member of Modi's party has only reinforced something that many can sense – namely that things are so bad there is great unease even within the ruling establishment.

However, while the likes of Yashwant Sinha and Chidambaram are right about the poor state of the economy, they may not be able to fully appreciate the scale of the crisis because of the limitations of their own outlook. Again, and for the same reason, while they are right that the government is clueless about how to fix the economy, they may not be able to fully acknowledge the real reasons why this is the case.

The GDP Growth Story: What lies Hidden Behind it?

The immediate trigger for the gloom about the economy has been the GDP growth figures for the first quarter of 2017-18 (April 2017 -June 2017) which were released at the end of August. This data reaffirmed the story of the sharp slowdown in growth seen in the last quarter of the previous financial year (January-March 2017). Obvious connections have of course been drawn between this slowdown and the Demonetization that immediately preceded these two quarters and the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) which followed (but the anticipation of which is supposed to have affected the economy). If these are the principal explanatory factors, then clearly the responsibility for the slowdown falls directly on the shoulders of the Modi regime. It has, however, also been noted that quarterly GDP growth rates were on a downward trend for a few quarters even before demonetization so that the government's failure may run deeper than merely the recourse to an ill-conceived demonetization and a poorly implemented introduction of GST. Also, the growth picture that we are seeing is based on the controversial new GDP series introduced a short while ago – the actual picture, as many have pointed out, might actually be far worse.

GDP is Gross Domestic Product, and is essentially a measure of total production in the economy in any given period from which incomes are generated. The production measure of it is currently referred to as Gross Value Added (GVA) at Basic Prices. Another way in which the same output can be measured is from the total expenditure on it – which is referred to as GDP at market prices. There is some difference in the magnitudes emerging from both measures but both will always move in tandem in an economic system where things are produced to be sold. Thus year-on-year quarterly growth of GVA at basic prices has fallen from a high of 8.7 per cent in Q4 of 2015-16 to 5.6 per cent in both Q4 of 2016-17 and Q1 of 2017-18. That for GDP at Market Prices has fallen from 9.1 per cent to 6.1 and 5.7 per cent respectively over the same period.

However, both GDP measures are aggregates for the economy as a whole and tell us nothing about how the use of the produced products or the expenditures making up the totals are distributed among different sections of the people. When the growth rate is 8 or 9 per cent per annum, it does not mean that everyone's income and usage of products is increasing at that rate – some can grow at an even faster rate while others may grow slowly. Correspondingly, if the growth rate slows down to 5 or 5.5 per cent per annum, it does not mean that everyone's income and consumption growth will slow down proportionately – some may experience a greater degree of decline while others may even see an acceleration. In other words, how good or bad the economic situation is or the nature of change in it cannot be simply read off from the growth rates and trends in it.

The GDP results from the labouring activity of people in several economic activities – like the peasant and the agricultural labourer, the factory worker, the transport worker, the maid, the sweeper, etc. In addition, it requires as its basis labouring in several activities which are not conventionally counted as economic activity in the statistics and are often undertaken by women in households. However, access to income and GDP is not proportionate to labouring activity because there are some who receive a part of what is produced as a return on their ownership of property or assets (land, factories, buildings or financial claims on these like shares and bonds) and there are certain kinds of 'work' which pay far more than other kinds.



The overwhelming majority of the Indian people are those who survive on their own labouring activity or the remuneration it can fetch them when they offer its services to others. Over the last twenty five years, they have faced a situation of income stagnation at extremely low levels even when GDP growth has been high, despite the fact that their labour produced that growth. This situation has been ensured by a combination of the following - the persistent agrarian crisis which has made agriculture an increasingly unviable proposition for most, the unending problem of unemployment or irregular employment which reduces their earnings, extremely low levels of wages even when employed and of course work which pays nothing. The larger part of the benefit of that growth accrued to property owners who not only expanded their consumption but also used those incomes to amass more property or wealth. Thus, GDP growth was not an indicator of what was happening to the economic conditions of the working people in India for whom crisis has been an almost permanent feature.

Property and wealth can however pay only when someone labours with that property to produce and someone is there to buy what is produced. If, however, those who labour receive very little, they would also buy very little. Continuous growth and accumulation in such circumstances becomes increasingly dependent on property owners' accumulation of further property providing increasingly the demand which would make their property pay.

Factories have to be built to produce not so much goods that people will consume, or goods required to facilitate that consumption, but goods that would be used to build more factories

and real estate. Real estate in turn has to be built not so much to house people but only to be purchased by some for future sale at a higher price. Such a process not being sustainable beyond certain limits means that the conditions for its collapse is always being nurtured in the womb of every rapid GDP growth and accumulation process which has such a character. Overaccumulation tends to make for conditions where property owners start holding back their own spending, not the part on consumption but the part being used to acquire more real property. This then reinforces itself by reducing the return on various kinds of property ownership.

The Nature of the Current Crisis

What we are witnessing in the Indian economy today is such a growth process characterized by a heavy concentration of benefits in a small section of the population coming undone by its own contradictions. Indian growth in the neo-liberal era brought little benefits to the working people and only intensified the uncertainty that characterizes their lives even as it squeezed the maximum effort out of them.

The holding down of public expenditure due to the mindless obsession with keeping taxes and the fiscal deficit low have in turn meant that there has been hardly any redressal of their problems through improved access to benefits flowing from public expenditure. These conditions have facilitated rapid and large accumulation of property after liberalization, mostly through the aegis of the corporate sector which saw its profits booming like never before.

This growth based on intensified exploitation, however, also undermined the basis for keeping demand growth commensurate with the expanding capacity in some sectors. That has eventually produced a protracted slump in the accumulation process from the beginning of the current decade, the most prominent expression of which has been the stagnation in investment. This is the context in which capitalists and other property owners have come to perceive the crisis which is ever present for most others. Unfortunately, this does not resolve but only intensifies the crisis of the working people because this situation makes it even harder to find remunerative work.

Narendra Modi had received the overwhelming support of India's big capitalists in the run up to the 2014 elections because they had expected the 'decisive' (and also divisive) leader to be politically more capable in pushing through further neo-liberal economic reforms. While this helped the Modi-led BJP win, what was also important was the promise of '*acchhe din*' which tapped the discontent of the ordinary people with the crisis created by the neo-liberal growth trajectory. Decisiveness, however, could not have solved the problem because it was directed towards pushing the neo-liberal agenda rather than resolving the fundamental imbalances generated by those reforms. When correcting the imbalances required at the least the use of taxes and public expenditure to redistribute and redirect resources and increase demand, the Government was steadfastly pursuing the objective of paring down the fiscal deficit. Subsequently, 'decisiveness' and 'political capacity' found their bizarre expression in disruptive forms like demonetization and the introduction of the GST, which have further deepened the crisis.

Since more neo-liberal reforms, GST being one of them, are the only answer the Modi Government has to the crisis, it is not surprising that it appears clueless about how to fix the economy. The advent of '*achhe din*' is looking, day by day and more and more like a pipe dream, for the working people of course but also for the rich and powerful.

Organise, Unite and Launch Issue-Based Struggle to Overcome the Agrarian Crisis

Vijoo Krishnan

The 34th All India Conference of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) was held at Hisar, Haryana from 3rd October to 6th October, 2017. Hisar was earlier host to the 27th All India Conference in 1992, only a year after the Congress Government led by P.V.Narasimha Rao started implementing the policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. That Conference had made a correct evaluation of these policies and pointed out that they would be detrimental to the interests of the peasantry when many were claiming they would be beneficial to the peasantry.

Twenty five years from then when the AIKS decided to go into its 34th Conference again at Hisar, it was in the context of intensified onslaught of neo-liberal economic policies and divisive communal policies under the BJP regime led by Narendra Modi.

This conference was also being held in the context of historic victories of united struggles in Rajasthan and Maharashtra that gave tremendous confidence to the peasantry across the country. In the four years since the 33rd Conference at Cuddalore, Tamilnadu, resistance has been meticulously built forging issue-based unity with the broadest sections and significant victories have been won facing extreme repression.

Undoubtedly, the infectious spirit of victorious struggles and the confidence it generated was the overwhelming ambience of the 34th Conference from the very beginning when thousands of peasants and workers and other sections of society marched towards the Kisan-Mazdoor Rally on 3rd October till the conclusion on 6th October, 2017. The Kisan-Mazdoor Rally, addressed among others by Manik Sarkar, Chief Minister of Tripura, Hannan Mollah, General Secretary, AIKS, President Amra Ram, K. Hemalata, President of CITU and others was attended by thousands of enthusiastic peasants and workers, students, youth and women. A book on the Warli Adivasi Struggle in Maharashtra written by Prof. Archana Prasad brought out by AIKS and LeftWord was released by Manik Sarkar. After the rally delegates marched to the Panchayat Bhavan premises named Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet Nagar. The Red Flag of AIKS was hoisted by Amra Ram amidst shouting of slogans. Delegates paid floral tributes at the Martyrs' Column. The conference hall was named Comrade Benoy Konar Hall and the stage was named Comrade Noorul Huda Manch in honour of the departed leaders. A life-size statue of Comrade A.K. Gopalan adorned the Stage.

The Conference began with the Condolence Resolution placed by N.K.Shukla. Prof. Ram Nivas Kundu, Chairman of the Reception Committee welcomed the delegates and Amra Ram delivered the Presidential address. Hannan Mollah placed the General Secretary's Report on which 43 delegates took part in the discussion. The conference discussed the impact of 25 years of neo-liberal economic policies, changes in agrarian relations, issues of the peasantry and struggles in the last four years as well as the important question of organisation.

The slogan of "Issue-Based United Struggles to Resist the Agrarian Crisis" and "Kisan Sabha in Every Village, Every Kisan in Kisan Sabha" underlined the main thrust of the Conference. The Conference unanimously adopted the Report and programme of action for the coming days.

Atul Kumar Anjaan, General Secretary of AIKS (Ajoy Bhawan) greeted the Conference. K.Hemalata, President, CITU, Thirunavukkarasu, President, AIAWU, Mariam Dhawale, General Secretary, AIDWA, Avoy Mukherji, General Secretary, DYFI, Vikram Singh, General Secretary, SFI, G.Mamata, DSMM, Muralidaran, General Secretary of NPRD, Subhash Lamba, AISGEF and others greeted the conference. Greetings from Trade Union International (Agriculture) were also received.

Three Commission Papers were thoroughly discussed by the delegates. The Commission on "The Role of Kisan Sabha in United Struggles" was presented by Dr. Ashok Dhawale and chaired by P. Krishnaprasad. The Commission on "Rural Credit Scenario and Insurance from Crop and Income Losses" was presented by Prof. Ramakumar and chaired by Jitendra Choudhary. The Commission on "Agricultural Costs and Prices" was presented by Prof. V.K.Ramachandran and

chaired by K. Balakrishnan. The discussions enriched the different Commission papers and suggestions will be incorporated to strengthen them.

S. Ramachandran Pillai inaugurated the website of AIKS, kisansabha.org developed by Prof. Vikas Rawal. The website is a repository of valuable documents and Conference Reports. The Credential Report was placed by P. Shanmugham. The Accounts were placed by P. Krishnaprasad and these were adopted.

The Conference also unanimously adopted 15 Resolutions on different issues affecting the peasantry— against social oppression, against the communal menace, against unjust land acquisition, on Forest Rights, RCEP and Free Trade Agreements, GST, Worker-Peasant Alliance, Women in agriculture, climate change and disaster management, on sugarcane farmers' problems, against infiltration of Israeli corporations into Indian agriculture, on restrictions on cattle trade and attacks by vigilante 'cow-protection' groups. A resolution against the killing of renowned journalist Gauri Lankesh and calling upon the peasantry to join in protests across the country on 5th October, 2017 and another on RSS/BJP and TMC attacks on Bengal, Kerala and Tripura were also adopted. The resolution on future struggles decided to hold country-wide torch-light processions on 30th October, 2017 along with other constituents of the Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan against the communal forces. Active solidarity and participation in the three day Mahapadav called by united trade unions from 9th-11th November, 2017 and massive mobilisation for the 20th November, 2017 March to Parliament called by the AIKSCC was also decided. A two-week long campaign from 1st November against the anti-people policies of the BJP Government and against communal forces will also be carried out. On 20th November, 2017 protests against the anti-peasant policies will be held across the country. Vijoo Krishnan was the Convenor of the Resolutions Committee.

After the conference elected Dr. Ashok Dhawale as the new President, it elected an All India Kisan Council of 141 members, which in turn elected a Central Kisan Committee of 65 members and 17 other office bearers. Hannan Mollah was re-elected as the General Secretary. P. Krishnaprasad was elected as the Finance Secretary. The Vice Presidents elected are Amra Ram, S. Ramachandran Pillai, K. Varadharajan, Madan Ghosh, K. Balakrishnan, S. Malla Reddy and S. K. Preeja (Woman). The Joint Secretaries elected are Vijoo Krishnan, N. K. Shukla, E. P. Jayarajan, Nripen Choudhary, K. K. Ragesh, Jitendra Choudhary, Amal Halder and Badal Saroj.

An exhibition involving social cooperatives like Brahmagiri Development Society, Regional Agro Industrial Development Cooperative, Farmers' Cooperative etc., showcasing the alternatives as well as book stalls was inaugurated by Amra Ram. Cultural programmes including songs, dances and plays filled the evenings.

The Haryana unit of the AIKS with ample support from different mass and class organisations made great efforts to make the conference a success. Hundreds of volunteers worked tirelessly for months and during the conference and without their collective effort the conference would not have been possible.

The conference will usher in a new history of peasant struggles in Haryana as well as across the country. It will undoubtedly prove to be a milestone in the peasant movement of the country. The Conference concluded on an inspiring note with a speech by Dr. Ashok Dhawale, the newly elected President of AIKS.

The days ahead will be filled with intense activity to try and expand the organisation to every village, enrol all Kisans in Kisan Sabha, meticulously build rock-solid issue-based unity and launch consistent struggles to reverse the neo-liberal economic policies, defeat divisive forces and ensure implementation of a pro-peasant alternative.

The Role of Women in Agriculture

Women's pivotal role in agriculture has never been recognized fully. They work as female agricultural labourers, as farmers, co-farmers, family labourers and (with male out-migration, widowhood etc.) as managers of the farm and farm entrepreneurs. This is reflected in the workforce distribution within rural regions where more than 80 percent of the female workforce is dependent on agriculture. According to the Census of 2011 there were approximately 149.88 million women

workers in India out of which approximately 121.83 million were dependent on agriculture and allied activities. More than 82 million of these workers (i.e. approximately 55 percent) identified themselves as agricultural labourers, whereas only approximately 30 million identified themselves as cultivators. It should be noted that the number of men and women agricultural workers identifying themselves as cultivators has come down substantially in the last one decade especially due to the policies of land dispossession followed by the current Modi-led government.

In this context, it must also be noted that a large section of the women's agricultural work is invisible in official employment statistics and also get unnoticed in agricultural policies. This can be largely attributed to lack of property and land rights for women even 70 years after independence. Though women's movements have been demanding 'joint pattas' for women agriculturalists for the last many decades, hardly any progress has been made on this account. Further, a lot of the unpaid work done by women involves access to common property resources like forests, grazing lands and water (all of which are crucial for survival). This access and rights have been severely impacted in the recent times with the corporate harnessing of nature and the corporatisation of agriculture. Today almost the entire female agricultural workforce can be classed as 'vulnerable workers' who have no social protection because their work is either invisible or subjected to a high degree of informalisation. This has also resulted in continued and widening gender wage gaps in agriculture.

This vulnerability is only increasing with the neo-liberal policies of the government which have resulted in the supply of cheap migrant women and child labour to large farmers in rich states like Maharashtra and Gujarat. The impact of the continuing three decade long agrarian distress is also immense of on women. With more than 3 lakh male farmers committing suicide, the number of female headed households in agriculture has increased from 10 percent to 12.88 percent between 2001 and 2011. Many of these households are headed by widows who have become helpless in the wake of rising loans and lack of support from the government. Further, the increase in household distress has forced women to look for agricultural work outside their own homes and become vulnerable to the oppression of contractors and sub-contractors many of whom are indulging in trafficking of women and child labour. The *Global Trafficking Report, 2016* (published by the UN) shows that instances of increased trafficking are intimately linked with agrarian distress. Given this abysmal situation, it is not surprising that women farmers and agricultural workers have been in the forefront of the struggles of the All India Kisan Sabha and the Agricultural Workers Union in the last three years. This Conference of the All India Kisan Sabha, resolves to continue to organise these women farmers and demand:

1. A comprehensive national policy to address the concerns of women farmers and agricultural workers. It should be noted that such a policy was proposed by the National Commission of Women (at the instance of Swaminathan Commission) in 2009, but was largely ignored by all successive governments.
2. The protection and recognition of women's land rights on private and common property resources.
3. Protection of women's forest rights and implementation of joint pattas in the forest rights act.
4. Comprehensive social protection of all women agricultural workers and the recognition of all their paid and unpaid labour as 'work'. Portable identity cards for migrant women workers.
5. A comprehensive loan relief and rehabilitation plan of the widows of farmers who have committed suicides in the last three decades.
6. A comprehensive gender sensitive, socio-economic rehabilitation plan for all families of dispossessed.
7. Implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act in agriculture and allied activities.
8. Implementation of labour laws in farms operated by corporate houses and registration of contractors supplying women and child labour to such farms.
9. Strict implementation of anti-trafficking laws in rural regions.

Maharashtra ASHA and Ghatparvartak Federation Conference

The second conference of the Maharashtra ASHA and Ghatparvartak Federation was held on 7, 8 October 2017 at Satara, Maharashtra. The conference began with flag hoisting and paying tribute to martyrs.

The chairman of the reception committee, Com Patil welcomed the delegates. The presidium comprised of Vijay Gabhane, President and the vice presidents of the Federation. 59 delegates and 33 observers from 17 districts participated in the conference.

The CITU state General Secretary M.H Shaikh, while inaugurating the conference congratulated all the ASHA workers for their historic participation in the 3rd August dharna demonstration in Mumbai and also for their support to the anganwadi workers strike and for refusing to take over their work. He called for united struggle by all the scheme workers.

After the inaugural session, a massive public meeting took place at the main chowk in Satara, in which over 2000 ASHA workers and Anganwadi workers participated. The meeting was addressed by M H Shaikh, Ajit Abhyankar, Ranjana Nirula and Shubha Shamim.

The report of activities was placed by Netradipa Patil, General Secretary of the Federation. 27 delegates participated in the discussion on the report. Resolutions on unity of all scheme workers, demands of ASHA workers to Central/state government, GST, support to striking farmers etc were moved and passed unanimously. It was decided to participate in large numbers in the joint Trade Union Mahapadav in Delhi in November.

In her intervention Ranjana Nirula, Convenor of the All India Coordination Committee of ASHA Workers (AICCAW), stressed on the need for increase in membership and rapid expansion of the Federation to all districts of Maharashtra. She put emphasis on the urgent need to build a strong organization, to train many more cadre and to develop a collective leadership. She spoke about the importance of wider unity and intensified struggle in order to achieve our demands as well as fight back the attacks of the government on workers' rights.

The conference elected its new leadership with Anandi Awaghade as President, Saleem Patel as general secretary and Archana Bhuri as Treasurer of the Federation.

Varsha Shelake and Vidhya Patil were elected as Vice Presidents and Pushpa Patil, Jaishree More and Renuka Tikande as Secretaries.

Delhi ICDS Supervisors and Staff of WCD Department on War-path

Hundreds of ICDS Supervisors, Statistical Assistants, LDCs and Peons working under the Women and Child Development Department of Government of NCR Delhi went on strike on 25.9.2017 protesting "unfair termination" of the services of 64 Supervisors. They are supervising most essential service of caring for lakhs of common women and children in Delhi. They have been working in the department on contract/outsourced basis for the last 10 to 22 years. They are not paid equal wages for equal work despite the orders of the Supreme Court on 26.10.2016. They have been facing gross exploitation by the department. Neither have they been made permanent employees nor given any social security or service norms as permanent employees. They are always being threatened with retrenchment. Now the government has decided to retrench them all and recruit new supervisors and other staff. During the new recruitment process they should have been given preference by the department as they have worked in the department as contract/outsourced employees since many years and are well qualified. But they have not been given an opportunity to sit in exams for the above posts.

Against this unjust decision of the Women and Child Development Department of Govt. of NCR of Delhi, a delegation consisting of Anurag Saxena, general secretary, Delhi state committee of CITU, H.C.Pant, General Secretary and Laxmi Narain, President of Delhi Offices & Establishments Employees Union, Kamla, General Secretary, Delhi State Anganwadi Workers & Helpers Union., Vikram, Mamta, Sunita, Nisha and Monika, leaders of the union met Smt. Shilpa Shinde,



Director of the department and submitted a memorandum on striking workers' demands. The delegation demanded not to retrench the ICDS Staff working on Contract/Outsource basis for a long time and discussed other just demands of the Union. But the Director was adamant and showed a very negative attitude towards these workers, so they are angry, agitated and continuing their strike.

The striking staff of ICDS of the Women & Child Development Dept. of Delhi government staged a Dharna and powerful Demonstration for one day on 25 September in front of the head office at K.G.Marg, New Delhi, 13 days in front of residence of Dy.C.M. & concerned Minister Sh.Manish Sishodia, Mathura Road, New Delhi and since 16.10.2017 they are continuing their sitting/ demonstration at Delhi Secretariat (ITO) New Delhi. Leaders of CITU, Delhi State Committee and other unions are daily addressing their strike rallies and supporting as well as guiding them properly. Their agitation is continuing successfully.

(Report from Lakshmi Narain)

Successful Working Women Convention in Telangana

Even though 33% reservation is provided in jobs, it is shameful that the government is not providing minimum facilities to the lady conductors working in Telangana State Road Transport Corporation said S.Rama, Convenor, Working Women, Telangana state, while inaugurating the State Convention of Working Women of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation. There are around 6000 lady employees working in TSRTC in different cadres. 90% of them are Bus Conductors. These conductors are afraid to even drink water, because no toilet facilities are provided for them, due to which many lady conductors are suffering from urinary diseases. Even separate toilets and rest rooms are not provided for the lady conductors in many Bus Depots. They are harassed by allotting early and late hours duties. The pregnant women are not given stationary jobs. Sexual harassment has become commonplace, irrespective of cadre.

The Staff & Workers' Federation(CITU) of Telangana RTC organized a state convention in Khammam, which was attended by 160 women employees, irrespective of union affiliations. 24 members participated in the discussion on the note presented by J.Padmavathi, State Secretary, TSRTC SWF. Sarita, Khammam depot, presided over the convention. The participants explained the problems faced by them inside the premises and online.



V.S.Rao, General Secretary and Ramchandrar, President explained how SWF is taking up working women issues particularly where SWF is recognised in Khammam region. They demanded that the management take necessary steps to resolve the problems of working women, including formation of complaints committees at depot level to check sexual harassment. They appealed to all the working women to fight unitedly for the redressal of their problems.

G.Lingamoorthy, M. Rambabu SWF state secretaries and Kumari, Khammam District convener, Working Women, also participated in the convention.

The convention unanimously elected J.Padmavathi as Convener, K.Geetha as co-convenor and 5 members. The convention resolved to organize protest demonstrations at all depots throughout the state.

(Report by V.S. Rao, General Secretary, TS RTC Staff & Workers' Federation(CITU))

Scheme Workers Convention in Haryana

A state convention of scheme workers-Anganwadi, Asha and Mid day meal workers - was held on 14 October 2017 at Rohtak, Haryana. Around 250 workers from all the three schemes participated. The Convention was inaugurated by A R Sindhu, secretary CITU, who explained how the government of India has slowly been dismantling the schemes.

Surekha, Secretary CITU Haryana, placed the resolution opposing the move by the Haryana government of handing over the midday meal scheme to panchayats, involving NGOS in the National Health Mission and introducing Cash transfer and ready to eat food in ICDS.

Saroj from the Midday Meal workers union, Suneeta and Parvesh from the ASHA Worker's union, Sheela and Shakuntala from the Anganwadi union all spoke, detailing the conditions and problems in their sectors.

Satvir Singh president CITU and Sabita from Sarv Karamchari Samgh greeted the convention. Jai Bhagwan, CITU State General Secretary, made the concluding remarks.

The convention resolved that all the scheme workers would participate in large numbers in the relay dharma on 9,10,11 November in Delhi. It was decided to organise a 72 hour padav on 9,10, 11 December at the district level. Various other forms of campaign and activities like signature collection and mass memorandum to elected representatives etc were also decided.



Hunger Haunts 20 Crore Indians as Modi Sarkar Sleeps

Savera

Latest reports indicate that Indian people continue to be haunted by hunger and malnourishment, with very minor improvement – and even worsening in some cases - over the past few years. Despite this shocking state, ending hunger is not on the agenda of Prime Minister Modi and his pseudo-nationalist government. In fact, his government has been cutting funds for essential schemes like the ICDS that provide nutrition to infants and pregnant or nursing mothers. The Modi government is thus directly culpable for the prevailing hunger. In the last 7 years, the share of population that is undernourished has declined from 16% to 14% according to the Global Hunger Index (GHI) report for 2017. Since population is growing at the rate of nearly 2% per year, this means that the absolute number of hungry and undernourished people in the country is actually growing and stands at about 20 crore, up from about 19.7 cr in 2007.

Among children, **malnourishment** caused by hunger is shockingly high and on some parameters it is worsening. **Wasting** in children, that is, low weight for height, is a typical symptom of malnutrition. According to the GHI report, prevalence of wasting increased from about 20% in 2006-10 to 21% in 2012-16. That's about 9.7 cr children. **Stunting**, which is low height for age, has gone down over the years but prevalence is a whopping 38.4% among children.

India has slipped from rank 97 among 120 countries last year to 100 currently in the GHI rankings indicating a worsening of the situation. Among India's neighbours, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are better than India.

Another study of undernourishment published in the medical journal Lancet a few days ago shows that about 58% of all boys and 50% of all girls in India are **underweight**, a clear and unambiguous sign that the bulk of tomorrow's citizens are severely deprived of food.

Lack of balanced nutrition means not just weakness and arrested development of the body but also damage to development of the brain in children. This is a legacy today's children will carry over their future lives.

Put together, all this means that about a quarter of the world's hungry people live in India, making it the hunger capital of the world. Seen in the context of the fact that 1% of India's population owns over 50% of wealth in the country, the existence of such an incredible scale of hunger and malnutrition in India is a damning indictment of the policies followed by successive governments.

Under the leadership of Modi, the present government has no plan or policy for ending malnutrition and giving two square meals a day to the people. These issues are never mentioned by Modi in his homilies on radio and television. The Niti Aayog, the prime minister's Economic Advisory Council, and apologists for the Modi sarkar in the media or intelligentsia have no thought about millions going hungry in the country. The RSS and their associates have never uttered a single word about hunger. The CII and FICCI, representing big industrialists of the country, too are blind to hunger though they constantly pressurise the government for getting more concessions to fill their coffers. The government has enough resources to build bullet trains and send spacecrafts to Mars but not enough to put food on the plates of people.

And now, with unemployment growing, job losses threatening across the country and economic activity slowing down due to bankrupt and incompetent leadership in the government, the prevailing hunger will grow further.

2.3 crore Children in India Malnourished

NEW DELHI: About 2.3 crore children in India, up to 6 years of age, are suffering from malnourishment and are under-weight, according to a status report on the anganwadi (day care center) programme, officially known as ICDS. This staggering number amounts to over 28% of the 8 crore children who attend anganwadis across India.



The status report includes state-wise data for under-weight children. In Bihar, the proportion of under-weight children is nearly 50%. Andhra Pradesh (37%), Uttar Pradesh (36%), Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh (both 32%) are some of the other large states with a high proportion of children being malnourished. Delhi reported that a shockingly high 35% of the nearly 7 lakh children who attend anganwadis were underweight. This shows that the extent of poverty and malnutrition amongst the urban poor is comparable to rural areas despite all the advantages the cities offer.

In all the north-eastern states except Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya, less than 10% of children were under-weight children. Other large states with a comparatively low rate of malnutrition are Maharashtra (11%) and Tamil Nadu (18%).

There has been no comprehensive survey of children's malnutrition in India since the last National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) in 2005-06. That had estimated 46% of children in the 0-3 years age group as underweight after surveying a sample of about 1 lakh households across the country. The data from anganwadis provides a snapshot drawing upon a much larger base. There were an estimated 16 crore children of ages up to 6 years in the country, as per the 2011 Census. Of these, about half seem to be attending the anganwadis going by the records of the programme. Most of those attending anganwadis belong to poorer sections. But large sections do not get access to it. A 2011 Planning Commission evaluation had said that there is a shortfall of at least 30% in coverage.

There are over 13 lakh anganwadis which look after the kids and provide 'supplementary nutrition' to them. As part of their duties, personnel at each anganwadi weigh the attending kids every month and keep a record.

In some states, like Delhi, there were cases where the hanging type weighing machine was not in working condition and hence only children up to three years of age could be weighed. In Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Kerala, workers said that they were weighing children up to 6 years.

Why is it that children's weight is not improving despite getting nutritional supplements at the anganwadis? In many states, the quality of food given to children is very bad and they may not be eating it, according to AR Sindhu of the Anganwadi Workers' Federation. *"Often this is the case where food provision service is outsourced to NGOs,"* she said.

(Courtesy – The Times of India)

Gujarat: Development for Whom?

As chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi claimed that his state was a 'model' of development. For whom this 'Development' is becomes clear from the following facts. The collaboration between the state and the corporate sector gained momentum under Chief Minister Modi. Gujarat is considered to be the most preferred destination of big capital among the Indian states because:

- The expected high rate of return. The Gujarat state government has played the role of "facilitator" and has created a 'business friendly' environment.
- The possibilities of labour strikes have been minimised,
- The voices of dissent have been curtailed,
- The labour laws have been almost abolished

The big corporates have been given all kinds of clearances at a faster rate and have been gifted with almost free land for industrialization, along with other required infrastructural facilities like water resources, electricity, roadways, etc. Businessmen have benefitted from low wages, and more tax breaks, with a lot of tax concessions given to attract more investment into the state. These tax concessions and other direct or indirect subsidies to corporates are given to ensure a higher rate of profit for them, while not using that tax payers money from the government exchequer for purposes of human development e.g. education, health etc.

Labour exploitation is also more severe in Gujarat as compared to the other states in India because of the most pro-corporate stance of the state government.

The graph explains how little share of the enormous profits made goes as wages to the workers, even in the organised sector. In the unorganised sector, the exploitation is worse.

This is the so-called 'Gujarat model'. For logical consistency, then, Gujarat being number one among

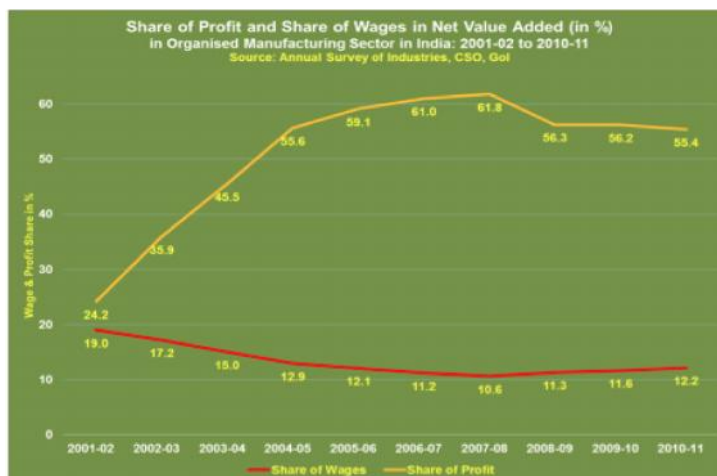
the Indian states in attracting big industries, should have been number one *vis-à-vis* human development indicators too. But Gujarat's performance is actually below average *vis-à-vis* the improvements (i.e. the change) in human development indicators.

Let us look at these data:-

The most important two areas of human development are education and health. According to the 2011 census data, Gujarat stands 18th among the 35 Indian states and UTs with respect to the literacy rate. If we look at the budget estimates of 2012-13, the government expenditure on education as percentage of aggregate government expenditure has been one of the lowest in the country – it has been only 13.4% in Gujarat as compared to the all states' average.

With respect to percentage of households with access to electricity, safe drinking water and sanitation, Gujarat ranks 13th among 35 states and union territories in India. This ranking of Gujarat was 9th in 2001. If we consider percentage households without access to electricity, safe drinking water or sanitation, we see that the rank of Gujarat was 17th out of 35 states & UTs in 2011, which was 12th in 2001.

Following Tendulkar committee poverty estimates, according to NSS large rounds, the rank of Gujarat with respect to percentage of population below poverty line was 16th out of 30 states in



India during 2011-12, more or less the same rank during 2004-05 and 1993-94. During 2009-10, the consumption-based inequality in Gujarat was 14th from the top out of 35 states & UTs in India.

Gujarat has one of the highest poverty levels of all the Indian states. Huge swathes of land allocated to corporates have displaced lakhs of farmers, fishermen, pastoralists, agricultural workers, Dalits and Adivasis. During Modi's tenure, 16,000 workers, farmers and farm labourers had committed suicide due to economic distress by 2011. Gujarat has the highest prevalence of hunger and lowest human development indices among states with comparable per capita income, its implementation of NREGA is the worst among large states, and Muslims, "*in particular, fare poorly on parameters of poverty, hunger, education and vulnerability on security issues*"(Shariff: 2011) . Refuting Modi's claim that the high level of malnutrition in Gujarat is a consequence of vegetarianism and figure-consciousness, an eminent scholar has pointed out that the real reasons are extremely low wage rates, malfunctioning of nutrition schemes.

Uncontrolled pollution has destroyed the livelihoods of farmers and fishermen, and subjected the local population to skin diseases, asthma, TB and cancer.

The scale of corruption in Gujarat is stupendous, and those who campaign against it have not fared well. With only 5% of India's population, 22% of the murders and 20% of the assaults of RTI activists in recent years have occurred in Gujarat, which has only two RTI Commissioners compared to eight in Maharashtra and nine in Tamil Nadu.

While the BJP is known for its expertise in religious polarisation, it is clearly social polarization which has helped it to win elections. The middle and neo-middle classes and the corporate world found it beneficial. This group is large enough to play a decisive role in elections.

(Input from the Internet)

Dalit Man, 21, Beaten to Death Allegedly for Attending *Garba* in Gujarat

Gujarat

At about 4 am on October 1, Jayesh Solanki, 21 was sitting with his cousin Prakash Solanki and two other Dalit men near a temple where a *garba* dance and other Navaratri festivities were held in their Bhadrana village, when one of the attackers came up to them and said Dalits "*do not have the right to watch garba*" and made casteist remarks, and then called other people to join him.

The attackers thrashed the Dalit men and banged Jayesh's head against a wall. The young man was taken to a hospital in Karamsad, where he died later in the morning.

The Working Class and the Great October Revolution

K Hemalata

The centenary of the Great October Revolution is being celebrated by the working class all over the world during the last one year. The 15th conference of CITU decided to observe the centenary of the Great October Revolution by focussing on the ideological development of its cadres. Many classes, conventions, meetings, seminars etc have been conducted all over the country by the state committees and affiliated unions of CITU as per this decision. In addition many other organisations of different sectors of the working class – of insurance, bank, telecom, state and central government departments, etc – have organised various programmes to commemorate the occasion. The Left parties too observed the centenary all over the country.

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) representing 92 million workers in 126 countries in all the continents observed the centenary through various programmes across the world. The WFTU leadership will be participating in the concluding event being organised by the Communist Party of Russian Federation in Moscow.

The Great October Revolution was an event that took place in Russia a hundred years ago. It led to the establishment of socialism in an industrially backward country like Russia. What is its significance that despite the reverses and setbacks to socialism in Russia as well as in the east European countries, the working class across the world continues to be inspired by it?

The October Revolution was an event that literally 'shook the world', as the American socialist and journalist John Reed wrote in his eye witness account, 'Ten Days that Shook the World'. It sounded the death knell of imperialism. The workers, peasants and other sections of toiling people tore apart the old exploitative structure of capitalism and erected the framework for a new exploitation free society, a socialist society. It showed the future path for the development of humanity. It was a shining example of '*concrete analysis of concrete conditions*' and masterly application of Marxist principles to change society, by the Bolshevik party, the party of the working class.

What the Revolution achieved was unprecedented and unimaginable at that time. It was a wonder. Even the so called 'welfare states' in Europe after the Second World War could not equal the rights and benefits achieved by the working class – land distribution, workers' control over factories, the right to recall elected representatives, free education and health for all, free nurseries, communal kitchens and laundries to liberate women from back breaking domestic work. The comment of the Czech communist Fuchs '*All our tomorrows had become today*' aptly describes the dramatic changes achieved by the revolutionaries.

The impact of the October Revolution on the national liberation movements across the world, the role of Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany in the Second World War, the immense sacrifices made the Soviet people in saving the world from the clutches of Hitler's fascism are well known. Socialist Russia extended unconditional help and support in developing the technological and industrial base in our country through the establishment of various public sector units, the establishment of premier institutions for engineering education and in the development of a self reliant economy after our independence.

What lessons can the working class of India learn from the experiences of the working class of Russia, which led a successful revolution that changed the world?

The conditions of the working class and their trade unions in Russia before the Revolution were not better than that of the working class in our country today. They were far worse. Though the labour movement in Russia began with the development of capitalism in the country and the first strike was held sometime between 1870 and 1880, it was not until 1905 that unions were organised. Trade unions soon expanded their influence. But repression on the unions and police persecution increased since 1907. The union committee members faced constant threat of arrest by the police. The police confiscated their funds and registers. The leaders including the presidents and secretaries of the unions were deported to Siberia. Czarism made it impossible for the unions to conduct their day to day activities and organise struggles on even the economic demands of the workers. Matters became worse with the declaration of war in 1914. War was used to further suppress the trade unions. The extent of repression can be understood from the fact that while around 200,000 workers were organised in trade unions in 1905, on the eve of the Revolution in 1917 there were only three unions with a total membership of 1500.

But despite this rudimentary state of the trade unions, the working class and other sections of toiling masses carried on their economic struggles with great tenacity. The working class gained its class consciousness through such struggles under conditions of severe czarist repression.

The war devastated the country. Conditions of the workers worsened. Food became scarce. Soldiers were forced to fight in the freezing cold without proper clothes or equipment. Discontent was growing among all these sections.

It was in such conditions that the women workers of Petrograd observed International Women's Day, for the first time on a working day on 23rd February 1917 (8th March as per the new calendar), by striking work. The women workers of the textile factory came out and marched on the streets calling out the workers of different factories on the way to join them. Hundreds of thousands of workers, men and women, joined the procession demanding bread and end to war. They demanded an end to monarchy. The military arrested hundreds of their leaders. Over a hundred people were killed on the day. Unhappy with the terror let loose on the people large section of the army joined the revolutionaries. This February Revolution forced Czar Nicholas II to abdicate.

The overthrow of czarism unleashed the creative and organising initiatives of the working masses. The workers organised into the Soviets of Workers' Deputies. These were councils of workers. In fact the first Soviet was established in Ivanovna - Voznesensk during a strike of textile workers in 1905, as a strike committee. Later it developed into an elected body of the town's workers. This was followed by the establishment of Soviets of Workers' Deputies in around 50 towns but these were crushed soon. The leaders were arrested and imprisoned. Soviets of Workers' Deputies and Soviets of Soldiers Deputies, who were from the peasant families and represented the peasants were formed and became active after the February Revolution. 1090 delegates representing more than 400 different Soviets participated in the first congress of the Soviets held in June 1917. By the time of the October Revolution there were over 900 Soviets. Majority of these including those in Petrograd and Moscow were controlled by the Bolsheviks. The Soviets of Workers' Deputies were instruments of political struggle for the working class of Russia.

The Bolsheviks did not have a majority among the Soviets from the beginning. They were in a minority till July 1917. But the tactics adopted by them under the leadership of Lenin helped them capture a majority of the Soviets by October.

Lenin emphasised the need to win over the majority of the Soviets by clearing the illusions that they had about the provincial government, by exposing the government through patient, systematic and persistent explanation. He stressed on the need to teach them the necessity of transferring

the entire state power to the Soviets. This was an important task set before the Bolsheviks. He also laid a lot of emphasis on organisation. He said *'To achieve such a victory (victory over capitalists), to have the workers and poor peasants take power, keep that power and make proper use of it, you will need organisation, organisation and organisation... Don't put your trust in words. Don't be misled by promises. Don't overestimate your strength. Organise at every factory, in every regiment and every company, in every residential block. Work at your organising every day, every hour; do that work yourselves, for this is something you cannot entrust to anybody else. Work to steadily, soundly and indestructibly build up full confidence in the advanced workers, on the part of the masses... Such is the one guarantee of success'*.

Lenin taught the working class about the importance of forging unity with the peasantry. Addressing the All Russian Trade Union conference he urged the workers to take the initiative to organise the agricultural workers and win over the majority of people to their side. *'The first commandment of any trade union movement is not to rely on the State but to rely on the strength of one's own class. The transfer of power to the revolutionary, oppressed class is the only way out of the present crisis, and the only remedy for economic dislocation and the war'*, he said.

These words of Lenin are as relevant now, when the working class is being attacked by the capitalist class trying to protect its profits in the wake of the systemic crisis of capitalism, as they were around a hundred years ago.

Today major sections of the working class in our country are under the influence of the ideology of the ruling classes. The ruling classes are attacking the lives, livelihoods, working conditions and basic rights of all sections of the toiling people – the workers, agricultural workers, peasants, artisans etc – through the neoliberal regime. These policies are meant to transfer public wealth into the hands of a few big private corporations. At the same time they are able to create illusions among the people through their false promises and slogans though people are slowly getting disillusioned. They are trying to weaken and thwart united struggles of the working people by evoking communal passions, caste feelings, and regional sentiments.

Bringing the working class and the toiling people away from the influence of the ruling classes requires *'patient, systematic and persistent explanation and teaching'* as Lenin taught us. *Ten Days that Shook the World* says that during the Revolution *'All Russia was learning to read and reading – politics, economics, history – because the people wanted to know... Hundreds of thousands of pamphlets were distributed by thousands of organisations and poured into the armies, the villages, factories, the streets.'* *People absorbed them like hot sand drinks water! These 'were not fables, falsified history, diluted religion, and the cheap fiction that corrupts but social and economic theories, philosophy, the works of Tolstoy, Gogol and Gorky...'*

Today we need to create such an urge among the working class and the toiling people to know, to understand the truth about the link between their day to day issues and the policies being pursued by the ruling classes, whatever sweet and attractive slogans they mouth. At the same time we have to make serious efforts to satisfy that urge to know and understand the truth by exposing the politics behind the policies through their own experiences; using the language that they can understand easily. We have to develop the class consciousness of the working class to realise its historic role in ending the inhuman capitalist exploitation and replacing it with an exploitation free socialist system. We have to prepare it to discharge this role.

The Great October Revolution teaches us that this is the only way to end the exploitative capitalist system.

International Action Day For Refugees and Migrant Workers

3rd October 2017: 73rd Foundation Day of WFTU

The world over, toiling masses and workers are facing problems of hunger, poverty, unemployment, suppression of democratic rights, human rights, civil liberties, cruel exploitation by forces of capitalism, etc. The crisis of capitalism is engulfing all and to put the burden of the crisis on third world countries, the capitalists are inventing and imposing varied methods and types of conditions in the name of trade agreement, economic cooperation, etc. They also impose economic blockades and attempt to strangle the poor countries. All these actions are geared to enhance the profits of the multinational corporations.

Similarly, to have an excuse to intervene in local affairs, imperialist forces foment ethnic, local clashes in various regions and countries and also wreak aggression in countries on various pretexts. All these make vulnerable sections of people feel unsafe in their own countries and force them to flee to other countries as refugees, where they have to face unparalleled misery. The crisis and unemployment situation forces people to migrate in search of livelihood also.

In this inhuman, unacceptable scenario, there is a need to resist these imperialist attacks. At the same time, it is necessary to fight for an alternative path of economic development and political

system. It is clear that we have to intensify our struggles against all these attacks and also fight to establish socialism as the world economic order. At this juncture, we the WFTU affiliates in India, AITUC, CITU, AICCTU, AIUTUC, UTUC and TUCC join the working class world over to highlight the problems of refugees and migrants which have assumed major proportions in many continents recently.

We observed the Foundation Day of WFTU on 3 October 2017 as



International Action Day for Refugees and Migrants. It started with a rally from the AITUC head quarters to the meeting venue, where a meeting was held. The presidium comprised of Dr. Vijayalakshmi- AITUC, Swadesh Deb Roy- CITU, Santosh Roy- AICCTU, Harish Tyagi- AIUTUC, Gaurav Kumar- TUCC and Shatrujeet Singh- UTUC.

The speakers were Amarjeet Kaur- AITUC, Tapan Sen- CITU, Rajeev Dimri- AICCTU, R.K Sharma- AIUTUC, Dharmender Verma and R.S. Dagar- TUCC. All the speakers vehemently condemned the callous attitude of the governments of various countries, which deny basic rights to the migrants. They particularly denounced the inhuman response of the government of India in dealing with the issue of Rohingyas from Myanmar coming to India. When genocide is taking place in their country, the government of India must extend all kinds of help to these poor refugees, a majority of whom are women and children.

A helping hand from everyone all over the world is the need of the hour.

We call upon the working class to stand united to safeguard the rights of all human beings on the globe. We have resolved to stand with the international working class community to support the cause of refugees and migrant workers and demand their re-settlement and protection.

AITUC

CITU

AICCTU

AIUTUC

TUCC

UTUC

“If You Tremble with Indignation at Every Injustice, Then You Are A Comrade of Mine”

Che Guevara

Fifty years ago Che Guevara was killed by the CIA installed Bolivian Government. He was not afraid of dying. He said to his killer - *‘I know, you are here to kill me. Shoot, coward. You are only going to kill a man,’*

A revolution cannot be killed. Nor a Revolutionary. Che remains the inspiration of revolutionaries all over the world even after 50 years of his martyrdom.

Born in Rosario, Argentina, in 1928, Ernesto “Che” Guevara de la Serna studied medicine before traveling around South America, observing conditions that spurred his Marxist beliefs. In the late 1950s he aided Fidel Castro in overturning the Batista government in Cuba and then held key political offices during Castro’s regime. Guevara later engaged in guerrilla action elsewhere, including in Bolivia, where he was captured and executed in 1967.

He was plagued by asthma in his youth but still managed to distinguish himself as an athlete. He also absorbed the left-leaning political views of his family and friends, and by his teens had become politically active, joining a group that opposed the government of Juan Perón.

After graduating from high school with honors, Guevara studied medicine at the University of Buenos Aires, but in 1951 he left the school to travel around South America with a friend. The poor living conditions he witnessed on their nine-month journey had a profound effect on Guevara, and he returned to medical school the following year, intent on providing care for the needy. He received his degree in 1953. As Guevara’s interest in Marxism grew, he decided to abandon medicine, believing that only revolution could bring justice to the people of South America. In 1953 he traveled to Guatemala, where he witnessed the CIA-backed overthrow of its leftist government, which only served to deepen his convictions.



By 1955, Guevara was married and living in Mexico, where he met Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl, who were planning the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista’s government. When their small armed force landed in Cuba on December 2, 1956, Guevara was with them and among the few that survived the initial assault. Over the next few years, he would serve as a primary adviser to Castro and lead their growing guerrilla forces in attacks against the crumbling Batista regime.

By 1965, he left Cuba to export his revolutionary ideologies to other parts of the world. He traveled first to the Congo to train troops in guerrilla warfare in support of a revolution there, but left later that year when it failed.

After returning briefly to Cuba, in 1966 Guevara departed for Bolivia with a small force of rebels to start a revolution there. He was captured by the Bolivian army and killed in La Higuera on October 9, 1967.

Since his death, Guevara has become a legendary political figure. His name is often equated with rebellion, revolution and socialism. After 50 years of his martyrdom, Guevara’s life continues to be a subject of great interest, especially among youngsters all over the world who want to establish a world without exploitation and oppression of common people.

Garment Workers in BRICS Countries Cannot Afford Basic Quality of Life

The global garment industry is infamous for its labour sweatshops in developing countries, where workers are grossly underpaid and work under despicable conditions – producing for a global apparel market valued at around 3 trillion dollars. A newly published study by the Centre for Environment and Sustainability (CES), at the University of Surrey, confirms that the wages garment workers earn are insufficient to support a decent standard of living. Taking the Western European clothing supply chain as a case study, the researchers set out to examine the issue of ‘fairness’ in global supply chains.



They analysed garment industry wages in 2005 in the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China. They found that garment workers get paid only around half of the ‘living wage’ – required to support a decent standard of living – as calculated by CES for each of the four countries. In fact, the research extends the concept of the living wage by taking into account the income tax and social security contributions of workers to arrive at the ‘living labour compensation’.

In terms of the living labour compensation, it found that workers on average need to be paid an additional 35% over the living wage to offset the financial demands of income tax and social security. The study used the Social Life Cycle Assessment (SLCA) approach, which analyses impacts across the entire lifecycle of a product. So, it considers not only factory workers, but also everyone else involved in the garment industry supply chain, including agricultural farmers.

And it found that agricultural workers are actually the lowest paid in the garment supply chain. While garment factory workers are paid around half the living wage, agricultural workers get paid even less in all the four countries.

What is a Living Wage?

The results are not surprising, as it is well-known that workers in the global garment industry get paid less than the ‘living wage’ – the wage required by a worker to meet the basic needs of a family unit of four (two adults, two children) in order to maintain a decent quality of life. The living wage is different from the ‘minimum wage’ for labour as fixed by the governments of different countries. There are different international estimates of the living wage for respective countries. The CES study calculates the living wage based on the method developed by Richard Anker, which has become the “benchmark for living wage discussions both in the academic literature and by activists”. And its estimates are “methodologically similar to several other estimates such as the Asia Floor Wage”.

As per the Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) – an alliance of trade unions and labour rights activists demanding that garment workers be paid a living wage – the figure for 2015 in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is \$1021. In India, this means a monthly minimum living wage of Rs 18,727 – without overtime payment and benefits. The minimum wages differ across the states of India, but all of them remain less than this amount.

Referring to the AFWA living wage, the president of the Garment and Allied Workers Union, told Newsclick, “*Workers in the Gurgaon-Manesar industrial hub of Haryana get less than half of this living wage. On average, in Asia, garment workers get about one-third of the Asia Floor Wage regional figure for the minimum living wage.*”

Since 2015, there has been an ongoing struggle of garment industry workers in Haryana to get companies to implement even the legal minimum wage as fixed by the Haryana government.

([Newsclick Report](#))

BHU: When Girl Students Rose to Fight for Freedom

Adeera

It was one evening in September in Varanasi, the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, when a girl student of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) complained of molestation by three men on a motorbike right outside the campus. But, instead of standing in support, the patriarchal university authorities blamed the girl for not keeping hostel timings. What followed was a spirited protest by girl students, supported by male students, demanding an apology for victim blaming. But, what did the university authorities do? They called in the police in the dead of the night, leading to a brutal lathi-charge on hundreds of students, leaving several injured.

Instead of dealing firmly with the eve-teasers, the then BHU Vice-Chancellor Girish Chandra Tripathi not only shirked his responsibility of providing protection to his students but also displayed utter disregard for the democratic protest by girls. It is shameful that he did not meet the agitating students even once despite repeated requests.

The brutal midnight lathi-charge on the peacefully protesting students also showed the utter disregard that the university authorities had for the genuine grievances of girl students. All they were demanding was an unconditional apology from the university authorities for blaming the victim, gender sensitisation of all faculty and office bearers, better lighting all across the campus, deployment of guards, and removal of curfew timings for women in the hostels. Is that a crime? What is even more shameful is that the then VC, who proudly speaks about his 40-year-old association with the RSS, tried to give a colour to the agitation by terming it “anti-national” and fanned by “outsiders”. Such utterances only go to prove the retrograde mindset of the proponents of Hindutva, many of whom have penetrated higher education institutions after the BJP/RSS government took over at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh.

BHU, which is largely a residential campus with about 40,000 students, is said to be most restrictive when it comes to girl students. According to the news portal, wire.in, the administration has banned the use of mobile phones by girls after 10 p.m. The VC has said that “girls who study in the night are immoral,” and has disallowed them from using the 24x7 library at night. There is discrimination even in the matter of food with non vegetarian food being served in the boy’s hostel canteen but not being allowed in the canteen in the girl’s hostel. To top it all, women students are made to sign an affidavit pledging that they won’t indulge in any protest or agitation and also not being allowed to participate in any socio-cultural activities outside the campus.

Across universities, it is this Hindutva espoused patriarchal mindset that dictates do’s and don’ts for girl students in the garb of ‘safety’, thereby curtailing their freedom, which is a right enshrined under the Constitution of India.

That the BJP/RSS world view is working overtime to curtail this freedom is also clear in the case of JNU, where the democratically elected and trusted Gender Sensitisation Committee Against Sexual Harassment, or GSCASH, was scrapped by the university authorities to be replaced by a largely nominated Internal Complaints Committee.

After the Modi government came to power, attacks on democratic traditions across universities have been growing, be it on administrative autonomy or freedom of students and academia. It is heartening that resistance, as in the case of BHU and JNU, is also growing. Universities are spaces for questioning and exercising the right to dissent. The need of the hour, therefore, is for students, teachers and the wider democratic world to get together and protect this precious space.

True Grit: A Special Girl Shows What Strength of Character Is

Twenty-six-year-old Vaishali Sharma from Agra, an MBBS from Aligarh Muslim University, cannot hear much. But she has trained herself to lip read. Even though she suffers from 80% hearing impairment, it has not stopped her from realising her dreams.

With 824 marks (out of 2,025) in last year's civil services examination, Vaishali ranked second in the physical disability category-3 but wasn't selected because examiners found her to be "temporarily unfit" as she was overweight. Candidates need to pass a medical examination, where their BMI is also measured among other things.

Instead of tears, Vaishali decided to shed pounds and appeared in the exam again. This year, she has scored 969 marks (47%), topping the exam in the same category.



Of the 1,209 candidates who cleared UPSC this time, 44 are in the physically challenged category. Among these 44, 15 are hearing impaired, seven visually impaired and 22 suffer from locomotor disability and cerebral palsy.

Vaishali said she was heartbroken when she wasn't recruited despite losing some weight in 2016 and getting herself certified by the government's health department. Her family had wanted to move court to seek justice for her, but she was determined to prove her point "*in another way*". "*Though I was shocked by what had happened then, I never gave up and was sure that I would succeed again,*" she said.

Vaishali said that though she has been using hearing aids, it's not easy as these devices only amplify the sound and do not process the words. She also could not pursue her PG in clinical branches because of difficulty in using a stethoscope and not responding to emergency phone calls.

She couldn't even attend coaching classes for her preparation for UPSC as she found understanding words in a group very difficult. "*I spent long hours in the AMU library studying by myself.*"

"I started lip reading and also observed people keenly to understand their body language and expressions," she said, adding that during interviews she focused on the interviewers' lips to understand what was being said. This year, she managed to score 170 marks out of 275 in the interview.

Vaishali, who recently started working at a Mathura hospital as a junior resident, said she felt "*low and frustrated*" in her childhood as she found herself "*different*" from others. "*My family supported me. Whatever I have achieved today is due to their support.*"

Vaishali's father is a former banker who took early retirement to focus on the career of his two daughters and a son, all of whom are medical practitioners.

(Courtesy – The Times of India)

Maharashtra Anganwadi Employees Strike

After a 10 day strike in 2010, 1 month in 2014, the Anganwadi workers and helpers of Maharashtra went on indefinite strike on 11th September 2017. This time with a determination to get a raise in their honorarium according to seniority. Last year after a long struggle the government formed an Honorarium Committee to consider raising honorarium every year. The Committee consisted of 5 representatives from the Anganwadi Unions. Shubha Shamim represented CITU affiliated Anganwadi Karmachari Sanghatana. The Committee prepared a proposal for raise according to seniority from this year, to be raised by a certain percentage every year.

The proposal was prepared by the committee after vigorous exercise. A meeting was to be held with the Finance Minister and then with the CM, so that the proposal would be accepted. The Maharashtra State Anganwadi Workers Action Committee waited for such meetings but nothing happened so it gave notice to go on strike from 1st April, 2017. The WCD Minister held a meeting with the representatives of the Action Committee on 30th March and gave an assurance to complete the procedures within 2 months and sanction the raise. The Strike was postponed.

Meanwhile district level and state level agitations were held continuously. In July a meeting of the Action Committee was held and decided to give a strike notice if the decision is not taken, the anganwadi workers will go on strike from 11th September. The whole month of July was marked by daily agitations. The demands day also focused on the demand. On 20th July, a Marathwada level Rasta Roko was held in Beed, the home district of the WCD Minister. On 25th July a state level rally was held on Azad Maidan, Mumbai. In both the rallies Pankaja Munde came to the venue of the agitation and promised the workers to hold meeting of Action Committee with the CM and solve the issue within 8 days. CITU's rally of Scheme workers on 3rd August also focused on the same demand. But no such meeting was held and the indefinite Strike started on 11th September as declared.

On 12th September a huge rally was held in Azad Maidan. The Finance Minister met the delegation and gave a shock by saying that there was no concrete proposal, mentioning the total financial burden by the WCD department. The meeting was held on 13th for the same and a concrete proposal was prepared. Maharashtra saw a series of state and district level agitations after that, during the strike. All the political parties except BJP gave active support to the strike. The media highlighted the Strike. On 27th a mammoth rally of nearly 25 thousand workers was held again in Azad Maidan in which Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray came and gave support despite the fact that he belongs to the ruling coalition. All the opposition party leaders and many MLAs also came forward to give support. More than 50 thousand workers courted arrest on 5th October.

At last the Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis took cognizance of the strike and called for talks on 6 October. A raise of 1500-1695-1760-1825 for Workers, 1250-1335-1380-1425 for Mini Anganwadi workers and 1000-1105-1140-1175 for Helpers, according to seniority, was sanctioned. 5% raise was assured from 1st April 2018 and the strike was called off on the assurance that a meeting with CM, FM and WCD Minister will be held to consider a further raise. The deal was struck under tremendous pressure. The workers are not satisfied but we had to call off the strike due to the split in one of the unions. The government took advantage of this and resorted to divide and rule tactics and repression. The Action Committee has declared that though the strike is off, the fight will continue.

(Report from Shubha Shamim)

AIFAWH Opposes Cash Transfers and Packed Food in ICDS; Calls for Country wide Protests and Burning of Effigies

All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) strongly condemns the **decision of the government of India, as stated by the Minister for Women and Child Development, to change the policy by replacing hot cooked meals in the anganwadi centres with ready to eat packed dry mixtures. We also condemn her totally unsubstantiated statement that 'anganwadi stopped being an effective delivery system 20 years ago' contradicting evidence provided by various studies and reports.**

We also condemn Secretary WCD statement, that the Ministry is going to introduce direct/conditional cash transfers in place of take home ration in 300 districts of the country, this year as per the directive of NITI Ayog and will extend it to all other units within next year. The reason cited is the complaints against the Take Home Rations!!

According to Ministry's statements and the Niti Aayog directive, the cash transfer is conditional not universal as of now in the ICDS. The proposal is to link it to Jan Dhan Bank account. In case any family for any purpose keeps an amount of Rs.50000 (for a college admission, for a marriage or for a hospital spending) in the account, they will not receive the cash either.

This indicates the intent of the BJP led NDA government to weaken and ultimately dismantle the anganwadi centres and to involve the corporate food giants in the ICDS. It is to be recalled that a former Minister for Commerce had invited Pepsico to provide packaged food to the anganwadi centres. Since coming to power the NDA government has been trying to dismantle ICDS. It has drastically cut down the budget allocations and changed the funding patterns, which has already affected the services of ICDS. It has replaced hot cooked food with take home ration. The cash transfer now will be the death knell to ICDS, which has earned worldwide recognition for its role in reducing severe malnutrition, bringing down infant mortality rate etc. Whereas India has slipped from rank 54 in 2014 among 120 countries to 100 currently in the GHI rankings indicating a worsening of the situation.

Take Home Ration of dry ration was opposed by AIFAWH from the beginning. In India's situation, the ration taken home will never be used to feed the beneficiaries (the pregnant woman, lactating mother or children under 3yrs) in the required quantity every day. It will be distributed among the elderly, men and other children at home. The freshly cooked locally available food has been recommended by all experts, national as well as international including the recently appointed Deputy Director General of WHO Dr. Soumya Swaminathan and the government committee on nutritional guidelines.

In addition, the jobs of over 26 lakh anganwadi workers and helpers, all women, mostly from the poor and socially oppressed sections of society, will be under serious threat because of this decision.

AIFAWH gave a call to protest and burn effigies throughout the country on 22,23 September 2017, and called upon the anganwadi employees all over the country to collectively thwart the attempts of the government for cash transfer. All its state units organised protest demonstrations throughout the country and burnt effigies of the government demanding withdrawal of this decision. AIFAWH will join the 'padaav' on 9-11 November 2017 in Delhi to raise their issues. It also decided to go for signature campaign to seek the support of the beneficiaries of ICDS, the common people and the organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, women etc in its struggle to Save ICDS.

Demands

***Stop the move to introduce Direct/conditional cash transfers and packaged food in ICDS *Stop privatization *Universalise and institutionalize ICDS *Allocate adequate funds for ICDS in the Central Budget *Implement the recommendations of the 45th and 46th Indian labour Conferences'Recognition, minimum wage, social security including pension**

AIFAWH Protests against Cash Transfer in ICDS



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**S Varalakshmi,
President,
Karnataka State
CITU addresses
Mahanada in
Bengaluru**



**Public Meeting of
ASHA Workers
Federation Conference
in Satara**

**Public Meeting of
Anganwadi Sevika
Sahayika Union
in Raipur**



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