

# The Voice of the Working Woman



Karnataka



Haryana

## WORKERS FIGHT BACK



Kerala

# Organise Protests! Mobilise People! Against Privatisation of Railways and PSUs

The BJP-2 Government has been trying to fast track the privatization process in various sectors. The Modi government has already declared privatization of various PSUs including steel, BSNL, defence etc. Government has declared privatization of Railways in its 100 days programme. In various industries like Steel, BSNL, Railways etc, the workers started agitating against the government move almost spontaneously.

CITU has given a call for a massive campaign and struggles against privatization of the PSUs to safeguard the self reliance of the country.

We have to take a special initiative to strengthen the anti-privatisation initiative against Railway privatization, in view of the importance of the sector and also the impact of railway privatization and related moves of the government on the entire people and society. We have to take the initiative to organise broad-based peoples' conventions involving other trade unions, mass organisations and other progressive forces, in all the states, against the move of railway privatisation. In this process the fraudulent statement by the Railway Minister that "*Railway would not be privatised but will adopt private public partnership in certain areas of railways operation for attracting private investment*", has to be exposed.

We must strengthen the anti-privatisation struggle in all sectors like steel, BSNL, defence sector etc and try to widen these struggles by involving the common people in these, through various mass organisations and social forces. Highlighting the impact of privatisation on the common people and the economy, the negative impact on the ancillary units leading to huge loss of employment and above all on self-reliance, have to be explained, campaigned on and propagated widely among the mass of the people. The anti-privatisation struggle must be elevated and widened to make it a peoples' struggle.

### 'Samuhik Jagran' on 14 August 2019

The CITU has decided to organise 'Samuhik Jagran' on the night of 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019 (eve of Independence Day) with the slogan, '**We Are Workers, We Build The Nation, We Protect The Nation, We Will**'. All state committees, federations and unions will campaign on the issues of the working class in general and of their sectors in particular, focussing on the alternative policies, and will mobilise workers in large numbers along with their family members, on this slogan.

<p><i>The Voice</i> of the <b>Working Woman</b> <i>Monthly Journal of the AICCWW(CITU)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Editorial Board</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Editor</b> K Hemalata</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Working Editor</b> Ranjana Nirula</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Members</b> A R Sindhu Sunanda Bhattacharya Anju Maini</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Inside</u></b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;"></th> <th style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">Page</th> <th style="width: 40%;"></th> <th style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">Page</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Budget 2019</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td>Water Crisis in India</td> <td style="text-align: center;">16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Women's Employment</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> <td>On Minimum Wages</td> <td style="text-align: center;">20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Women on the Move</td> <td style="text-align: center;">10</td> <td>Press Statements</td> <td style="text-align: center;">23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>India Today</td> <td style="text-align: center;">13</td> <td>Assam Flood Relief</td> <td style="text-align: center;">27</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" style="text-align: center; padding-top: 10px;">Total pages - 28 (including cover pages)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Page		Page	Budget 2019	4	Water Crisis in India	16	Women's Employment	8	On Minimum Wages	20	Women on the Move	10	Press Statements	23	India Today	13	Assam Flood Relief	27	Total pages - 28 (including cover pages)			
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## Resist and Fight back!

The Modi-2 government is “paying back” to its corporate sponsors, just as we apprehended.

The ‘hundred day programmes’ announced by various ministers as per the direction of the Prime Minister shows the haste of the BJP to appease their real masters – the corporates. In a most brazenly shameless manner, the railway ministry has announced the privatization of India’s lifeline- the Indian Railways- which is the largest employer in the country, running twenty thousand passenger trains carrying 826 crore people a year, generating a revenue of 1.87 trillion rupees - within 100 days.

Indian Railways’ production units, described as ‘jewels’, which have the capacity to manufacture the required diesel engines, coaches, wheels and even the high speed *Vande Bharat* express with modern facilities will be privatised under a corporation called ‘Indian Rolling Stock Company’. Private operators will be allowed to run trains on our railway tracks. The government has also decided to hand over ticketing and on board services in trains on some routes including the Golden Quadrilateral and Diagonal to private operators. Not only that, even the railway stations will also be handed over to private players, on the pretext of ‘redevelopment’. The Action Plan identified 50 railway stations including Howrah, Secunderabad, Chennai Central etc., for such ‘redevelopment.’ The immediate impact of this for the common people will be the doubling of the train fare.

The maiden budget of the Modi 2 government also reiterates the same approach in various fields. The speech by the ‘woman Finance Minister’ presenting her ‘desi’ budget was surprisingly without any figures, but was full of several promises to corporate capital and the wealthy. There are no measures for the minimum support price for the peasantry or to guarantee minimum wages or jobs for the working class, but there is a cut in the allocation for MNREGA. The budget made a move for commercialization and financialisation of social welfare through ‘social stock exchange’. No increase in allocation for the schemes or scheme workers. The woman minister has nothing to offer women workers.

The Labour Minister has also done his bit for the corporate: a promise of immediately bringing in the Labour Codes for ‘ease of doing business’ and an announcement of a National Floor Level Minimum Wage of Rs 178 per day (Rs 4628/- per month for 26 days)!

These policies, coupled with diversionary tactics and divisive violence unleashed by the RSS led communal forces like the mob lynching incidents in Bihar, Jharkhand and other states, and the attack on adivasis in Sonbhadra, UP, which have increased dramatically immediately after Modi came back to power will again take the country into uncontrolled violence and lawlessness. Rather than leading to any real development, these will only lead to economic and social slavery.

The working class is already on the move with the railway factory workers on spontaneous strike, other PSU workers – BSNL, steel etc in struggle. The protests of scheme workers are also visible in every part of the country. These struggles have to be developed into real mass struggles with the support of all patriotic people of the country. It is our duty not only as workers, but also as the citizens of our country, to resist and fight back to change these policies.

## More of the Dismal Same

*The budget needed to break new ground, provide a thrust to a slowing economy. This budget lacks innovation.*

Prabhat Patnaik

Economics has never been a strong point of the NDA government. Its only two major economic forays, demonetisation and the GST, have both turned out to be pretty disastrous. It was futile, therefore, to expect much from the Union Budget for 2019-20. Even so, one is surprised by the budget's lack of engagement with the current problems of the economy, which are serious: A slowing down of activity, agrarian distress, massive unemployment, and external payments worries exacerbated by Donald Trump's belligerence.

There has been a perceptible slowdown in revenue growth of late, partly because of the slowdown in activity, but mainly on account of poor GST collections. The finance minister quoted the revised estimates of receipts for 2018-19, which are close to the budget estimates for that year, but these are well above the latest figures given by the Controller General of Accounts. According to the latter, there has been a shortfall of Rs 1.6 lakh crore in GST revenue of the Centre in 2018-19 compared to the budget estimates. The situation in 2019-20, originally expected to be better, is unlikely to be so.

Expenditure in the budget, both overall and in critical areas affecting the people, scarcely shows any significant increase. At the most, expenditures grow roughly at the same rate as the expected nominal GDP. Curiously, however, MGNREGS shows a slight absolute fall compared to the 2018-19 revised estimates, which is incomprehensible in the midst of acute joblessness.

Even these expenditure figures have been projected on the basis of 2018-19 revised estimates. With actual receipts falling well short of the revised estimates, and this shortfall continuing into 2019-20, it is doubtful if even these expenditure targets will be realised without increasing the fiscal deficit substantially, which the NDA's desire to appease globalised finance will not allow. Even these expenditure targets will not be maintained, compounding the recession that is setting in.

What was needed was not a budget that just projected receipt and expenditure figures on the basis of existing trends, but that broke new ground by bringing in some additional revenue source, some exogenous element, which could provide a thrust to the economy. But the NDA government, true to form, has rejected any innovation. By simply projecting existing trends of receipts to the future and providing for expenditure accordingly, the budget becomes pro-cyclical rather than counter-cyclical.

The most obvious exogenous element that could have been introduced to break out of this pro-cyclicity is a wealth tax, at least on the billionaires of the country, whose wealth is estimated at present to be around Rs 560 lakh crore. Even a 1 per cent wealth tax on these billionaires would have fetched Rs 5.6 lakh crore and an inheritance tax, that must accompany a wealth tax to prevent evasion, could have fetched more. Even assuming that 5 per cent of billionaires' wealth gets passed on every year, an inheritance tax that took away a third of this wealth getting passed on, would have fetched an additional Rs 9.3 lakh crore.

These two taxes alone, both imposed only on billionaires, would have raised around Rs 15 lakh crore, quite sufficient for financing a rudimentary welfare state in India. Such a state could

guarantee every Indian five basic economic rights: A right to food, a right to employment, a right to quality education up to the secondary level, a right to quality healthcare through a government-run National Health Service, and a right to old age pension of Rs 2,000 per month (against the current paltry Rs 200 per month) and adequate disability benefits.

Indeed, prior to the budget there was speculation that an inheritance tax would be introduced. This, not surprisingly, did not materialise. On the other hand, there is much talk of enticing foreign direct investment. If there is any strategy at all behind the budget, it consists in attracting FDI to the country (even by suppressing workers' rights and making land takeover easier), and thereby stimulating growth, which, it is hoped, would eventually alleviate unemployment. Instead of government spending, and above all government welfare spending, being the means of introducing dynamism into the economy, getting foreign investment into the country appears to be the weapon the government hopes to use.

To expect this strategy to usher in development is a pipe dream, especially at this time when the world economy is slowing down, and when multinational corporations have low inducement to invest anywhere anyway. After all, this was the idea behind [Narendra Modi's](#) "Make in India" slogan. How much did that achieve?

Besides, even assuming for a moment that some investment does occur as a result of these blandishments, how many jobs will that create? The rate of growth of labour productivity along the trajectory of multinationals-led, or Indian big-business-led, growth is so high that even rapid GDP growth rates do not generate enough employment to absorb fully the natural increase in the work force. To expect such growth to alleviate unemployment is utterly unrealistic. All this is well-known by now but the Modi government, like the Bourbon kings of France, "learns nothing and forgets nothing".

Two aspects of the budget are fraught with serious consequences for the future. One is the desire to access international financial markets for government borrowing. There is no earthly reason for this, since the limit on government borrowing comes from the self-imposed ceiling on the fiscal deficit, not from government's inability to borrow from the domestic market. Raising government loans abroad, vastly and directly, increases the hold of international finance upon the Indian state, whereby the slightest delay in debt servicing can cause the imposition of draconian "austerity" upon the country. Besides, it links the foreign exchange market with the financial market, so that a depreciation of the rupee would raise the debt burden of the government, and hence of the country, manyfold, which would make the government particularly vulnerable to external manipulations.

The second issue relates to federalism. The GST itself was a massive attack on the federal structure of the Constitution, which the state governments unwisely acquiesced in. The failure of the GST to garner adequate revenue has put state government finances in a bind. On top of that, in the current budget, the Central government has resorted to cesses and surcharges for raising revenue, which means that this revenue is not shareable with the states.

This budget, in short, has been used to centralise resources in the hands of the Union government. This is dangerous, for when the states are pushed to a corner and come to the Centre for help, it can play favourites and penalise "inconvenient" state governments. This is dangerous for federalism and democracy.

*(The writer taught economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)*

# Budget 2019 Reeks of a Lack of Real Ambition

*Jayati Ghosh*

In terms of economic vision, it has always been difficult to make sense of the Narendra Modi government.

The previous five years were hardly inspiring in economic terms: relatively little was done in terms of positive changes to address the major problems in the economy. Most economic policies of the earlier government – including some more problematic ones – were simply continued, often in a renamed or repackaged form, while the regime was punctuated by the twin disasters of demonetisation and the badly botched and rushed implementation of the goods and services tax.

Meanwhile, especially before the general election, the government put its head in the sand and simply denied the most obvious economic problems. It encouraged changes in the estimation of the GDP that were opaque and appeared to be unfortunately partisan, creating scepticism about the reliability of the data within and outside the country.

It suppressed unsavoury economic data like the report of the employment and unemployment survey emanating from its own statistical agency, which showed falling labour force participation especially of women and historically high open unemployment. It refused to admit the problem of low investment rates that were afflicting industry.

It offered a minor sop of cash transfers to some farmers in lieu of addressing their significant and growing problems that had resulted in a year of almost continuous farmers' protests. Overall, it kept insisting that everything is fine in the economy, despite all evidence to the contrary.

Even so, a lot was expected from this first Budget to be presented by the new government. After all, this government now has enormous political capital, having just comprehensively won the recent election, despite all concerns about how that election was run, and so it can afford to announce big policies. Modi had already shown himself to be able to make bold decisions (demonetisation was certainly a bold decision, albeit a crazy and disastrous one).

The prime minister and other government officials have gone on record over the past few days, with extravagant claims of transforming the country through a ten-year vision of a "new India", in which the size of the economy will supposedly more than double in just five years. (This is what the prime minister's goal of achieving a \$5 trillion size of GDP by 2022 amounts to, even with the optimistic assumption of a stable exchange over the period.)

And there was much talk of blue sky thinking and bold moves to deal with the economic challenges ahead.

So what did the Budget finally deliver on these expectations? In the wake of all the promises, most people were left scratching their heads trying to identify even one big idea or significant move.

Certainly, the silence on major issues like job creation and the viability of agriculture was deafening.

The low investment rate was simply assumed away – in line with government arguments that investment has anyway bottomed out and will now increase. The problems in the banking and non-bank finance sector did get some much-required attention, but the proposed moves are minor and may well be inadequate to deal with the scope of the problem. Despite much emotion expended on small enterprises, there is really nothing that would improve their conditions significantly.

As has become usual in the last few years, the Budget was extremely optimistic in the matter of estimating future revenues. GST revenues are projected to go up by more than 13% over last year's receipts, a tall order given the already poor receipts of the first quarter.

There is a sop to the middle classes in terms of the increase in the exemption rate to Rs 5 lakh income per year, which it is claimed will be counterbalanced by slightly higher taxes on the very rich. The Centre has continued to centralise and bypass Finance Commission awards – surcharges and cesses, which do not have to be shared with state governments, are projected to account for around 16% of the projected tax revenues.

On the expenditure side, the lack of action may be even more surprising. The only big increase is on the pre-election scheme of cash transfer to farmers, the PM-KISAN, which will eat up Rs 75,000 crore. Infrastructure development is supposed to be a big priority of this government, but only the railways gets a reasonable additional allocation of just under Rs 13,000 crore (leaving out the high hopes of vast amounts to be raised through Public-Private Partnerships).

Road transport and highways get an increase of only 5.6%, barely keeping pace with projected inflation, while rural development fares even worse, with an increase of less than 5%.

Other social sector spending mostly just about increases in line with the increase in nominal GDP, in other words remains around the same. The absence of any mention of the supposedly flagship Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme in the Budget speech fits with its absence in the detailed budget papers, but it is no less surprising for that.

Instead, the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana – which was supposed to be rendered defunct by the new scheme – has seen its tiny allocation increase from Rs 2,770 crore to Rs 6,656 crore – a tiny drop in the ocean of the projected requirement. As it happens, I am not an admirer of this scheme, which seeks to substitute two layers of private providers for a better funded public delivery scheme. But does the lack of outlay suggest that the government is also no longer so enamoured of this scheme?

The surprise, then, is in the lack of ambition.

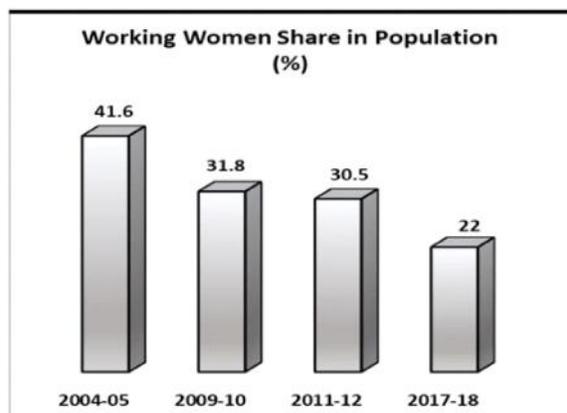
But perhaps this confirms something that became quite clear before the elections: this is a government that is less interested in improving people's economic conditions than in capturing people's hearts and minds for its own goals.

That is why one of the chapters in the Economic Survey, when combined with the new "ease" of taxation using only Aadhaar as announced in the Budget speech, should give us all pause. For those of us worried about the possible abuse of Big Data, its forthcoming marriage with Big Brother, as indicated by this Budget, may be the single most important indicator of the future intentions of this government.

(Courtesy: The Wire)

# Crisis of Women's Employment Deepens Under Modi

Savera



ONLY about 22 per cent of women of working age (defined as 15 years of age or more) were gainfully employed; unemployment among women has doubled and women's wages/salaries languish at half to two thirds of what men doing similar jobs get. These are some of the shocking revelations contained in the recently released report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2017-18, carried out by the government. It may be recalled that the report was ready in December 2018 but the Modi government deliberately suppressed it till after the general

elections.

Women's participation in the work force at 22 per cent is the lowest in decades, down from about 31 per cent in 2011-12, as estimated by the 68th Round of NSSO survey. In 2004-05 it was 41.6 per cent, double the level in 2017-18. India already had low women's work participation but it has sunk to a new low, one of the lowest in the world. It is 61 per cent in China, 55 per cent in Russia, 51 per cent in the European Union, 57 per cent in North America and the world average is 48 per cent.

These latest estimates are for what is called the 'usual status (principal+subsidiary)' which means that any woman who worked for a large part of the preceding year in an occupation as well as those who worked in subsidiary occupations (for more than 30 days in the year) are included as employed. This is a rather nebulous definition and includes a large number of under-employed women. Despite that, the remarkably small share of women in work highlights the deteriorating problem of women's employment in the country. No government, whether the current one in its previous tenure or earlier ones have seriously addressed this tragic situation.

This has happened during the tenure of the first Modi government. Coming in the background of a worsening jobs crisis, the plummeting women's employment rate shows that it is women who have borne the brunt of the jobs crisis that Modi presided over. Not only did Modi and his government fail to boost public investment, push industrialisation and relieve farm distress, it had no clue about how to increase women's jobs.

## **Women want work, but it is not available**

Are women unwilling to work, as is often argued by apologists for the government? Other information in the PLFS report contradicts this view. As the chart below shows, women's unemployment, that is, the share of women who are seeking work but unable to find it, has increased precipitously in the past few years.

In rural areas, where the bulk of women stay, joblessness has doubled from 1.7 per cent in 2011-12 to 3.8 per cent in 2017-18, according to the PLFS 2017-18. In urban areas too it has doubled in that period from 5.2 per cent to 10.8 per cent.

Not just this, among educated women (those with secondary level education or more), unemployment rate was a stunning 17.3 per cent in rural areas and 19.8 per cent in urban areas. Among young women, that is those in the 15-29 years age group, unemployment was 13.6 per cent in rural areas and a staggering 27.2 per cent in urban areas.

If one in five educated women and one in three young women are available and seeking work, this can hardly be a situation where women don't want to work. The reality is that women do want work but are unable to get opportunities. Available work is too low paying (see below) or too unsafe and unsecure. In addition, women have to face patriarchal resistance from family members who still hold the regressive view that women should remain confined to their homes and not stir outside.

According to the survey, the share of working women goes up in richer families. Among the poorest 10 per cent of families, just 16.5 per cent women work in rural areas while among the richest 10 per cent families, the share increases to 19.7 per cent. Similarly, in urban areas, the share of working women goes up from 11 per cent in the poorest to nearly 20 per cent in the richest families.

So, what are the rest of the women doing? The bulk of them are no longer in the labour force, that is, they are not seeking jobs. They confine themselves to domestic duties, which in India include such drudgery as collecting firewood or fetching water, as also looking after cattle. Needless to say, they also do all the care work at home.

This situation was there earlier too but in recent years, the decline in work opportunities and specifically, the decline in farm jobs due to deep agrarian crisis, has pushed more and more women back into the four walls of stultifying domesticity.

### **Women's wages**

Compelled by the pressing need to supplement family incomes in these times of economic crisis, some women do go out to work but find that the wage or salary levels are shockingly low, as can be seen in the table below, drawn from the PLFS report.

Note that even among the regular wage or salary earners, women's monthly earnings are 34 per cent less than men's in rural areas and 19 per cent less in urban areas. The biggest difference in earnings is in the vast self-employed sector where women's earnings are less than half of men's in both rural and urban areas. This is because these self-employed women workers usually run their own small enterprises like petty shops or they are service providers of all kinds, assisting in the main work being done by the men folk, with hardly any demarcated earning. Also, many of the very small shops (like selling candies or tobacco products or vegetables) is left to women while the men go for other work.

The main employment for women in the self-employed category comes from personal and other services which employ over 44 per cent women in urban areas and about 9 per cent in rural areas. These are all the maids, cooks, ayahs, housekeepers, sanitation workers, press walis, and similar service providers that smoothen the lives of families with disposable incomes. Women are also employed by government in large numbers in out-sourced care work like health workers, anganwadi workers, cooks in schools, nurses etc – all of them at very low wages and no job security.

According to the PLFS, women's employment in the manufacturing sector has stagnated at around 8 per cent in rural areas and about 25 per cent in urban areas for the past nearly one and a half decades. Construction, which was once a big source of women's employment, appears to no longer be in good shape as, in rural areas, women's employment has declined from 6.6 per cent in 2011-12 to 5.6 per cent in 2017-18, while in urban areas it has practically stagnated at around 4 per cent.

What the latest data from this PLFS unequivocally establishes is that while the overall employment situation is dire (with joblessness at 6.1 per cent), women continue to suffer the brunt of this crisis with higher rates of unemployment, lesser opportunities and continued lower wages. And, the present government – like all its predecessors – has no clue about how to solve this crisis. Unfortunately, with a government that believes that women are best suited to decorate homes, serve their husbands and rear children, not much can be expected in terms of resolving this crisis.

# AIFAWH Demands Day

## 10 July 2019

### Lakhs of anganwadi workers and helpers Protest at District headquarters all over the country

In spite of heavy rains in many parts of the country, lakhs of anganwadi workers and helpers demonstrated in front of central government offices and district headquarters to observe All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) All India Demands Day, on 10 July 2019. AIFAWH congratulates anganwadi workers and helpers all over the country for the massive protest observed this year with the slogan “No more Muzaffarpur, For Malnutrition Free India, Strengthen ICDS, Fulfil the promise of freedom” in the background of the deaths of more than 150 children in Muzaffarpur.

Lakhs of anganwadi workers from 22 states – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Pondicherry, Rajasthan, Telengana, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal observed “All India Demands’ Day” at the call of AIFAWH. Being the first national level protest action after the new Government came to power, that too in the background of such a tragedy and also in a situation where the supplementary nutrition and salaries were not paid for months together in many states including Bihar, the response to the call was very encouraging.

They are also agitated because the BJP and RSS, during the elections and after government formation, have been campaigning continuously for the wages of anganwadi workers and helpers to be increased to Rs.18000 per month. Such messages are being sent to the workers using social media in a large way. But the budget, placed with much fanfare by the woman finance minister of the Modi-2 government, even in the aftermath of Muzaffarpur did not increase a single rupee in allocation for ICDS. In addition, various states are yet to pay the increase in wages announced in September 2018 to the workers. Many state governments are opening pre-schools in schools, thus taking away children from anganwadis. Direct Benefit Transfer and centralized kitchens are also being attempted in some states.

Throughout the country, the workers paid homage to the children who lost their lives in Muzaffarpur, where a meeting was held of hundreds of anganwadi workers and helpers. In the recent conference of Bihar State Anganwadi Sevika Sahayika Sangh it was decided to organise a year long campaign and action in Muzaffarpur against malnutrition and to strengthen ICDS titled “**Freedom from malnutrition and ill health, no more deaths of children**”, from 14 August 2019.

#### Demands of 10 July

- ◆ Make ICDS permanent; Increase the budgetary allocation for ICDS
- ◆ Pay minimum wages and social security and pension to the anganwadi workers and helpers as recommended by 45<sup>th</sup> ILC.
- ◆ NO privatization of ICDS in any form; No involvement of corporate companies or NGOs in ICDS
- ◆ Strengthen ICDS; convert anganwadis into anganwadi-cum-crèches; increase allocation for nutrition; strengthen and retain the pre -school education in ICDS.

## **AIFAWH - Hindi States Trade Union School**

The All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) organized a five day Trade Union School for activists from Hindi speaking states from 22 – 26 June 2019 at P Ramamurti Bhawan, Saket, New Delhi.

43 activists from Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and centre participated in the school, which was meant for state level leaders.

The school started on 22<sup>nd</sup> June with a brief introduction by A R Sindhu, General Secretary, AIFAWH. Dr. Veena Gupta, secretary, AIFAWH was the principal. The school started with the subject “International situation – yesterday and today” which was taken in two sessions. Professor at Delhi University, Rajeev Kunwar, explained the development of capitalism and the nation states and how the quest for profit has made capital cross boundaries and how greed had led to world wars. He detailed the socialist revolutions, and the rise and defeat of fascism.

On the second day, the first session was on “Making of Indian Nation” and the second session was on “Identity politics”. Both these classes were also taken by Rajeev Kunwar.

On 24<sup>th</sup> June, K Hemalata, President, CITU spoke on “India, Class Character of the State and our Tasks”. The participants could relate their issues with the policies, the politics and class character of various political parties and the state.

On 25<sup>th</sup> June, A R Sindhu, dealt with different aspects of “Organisation” – the importance of membership, democratic functioning, cadre development and financial transparency. In the group discussions and presentations, the participants could identify the organizational weaknesses at the state and lower levels in their states.

On 26<sup>th</sup> June the last session was on “Current Task on Anganwadi Front” which again was taken by A R Sindhu. The stages of movements in various states and the focus of struggles at local and state level in the context of the national situation were discussed. The organizational priorities and the larger political responsibilities in taking initiative in organising other sections of society were also discussed. In their group discussions all the states took some targets for the next one year. Different activities - leaflet writing and songs on the issues before the working class organized in the evenings saw active participation of the participants. Short films on different subjects were shown to the participants.

Being the first class organized by AIFAWH in P R Bhawan, the trade union school of CITU, participants were very enthusiastic and disciplined.

## **Anganwadi Union Bihar State Conference**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Bihar Rajya Anganwadi Sevika Sahayika Sangh was held on 6-7 July 2019 at Chanda Nagar, District headquarter, Arval district.

The Conference started with Md. Yusuf, the working president of the union hoisting the flag.

The conference was inaugurated by Usharani, President AIFAWH in the open session which was attended by nearly 1000 workers and helpers. She explained the policies of the central and state government and the political situation after the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections.

Dipak Bhattacharya, president Bihar state CITU and Sagir Nekhule, district CITU leader addressed the open session.

The delegate session which was chaired by Md. Yusuf was attended by 300 delegates from seven districts.

A R Sindhu, General Secretary AIFAWH, inaugurated this session. She narrated the struggles by AIFAWH and various state unions and the achievements. She congratulated the Bihar anganwadi union under CITU for its successful united front tactics and its success in the joint

movement which could achieve an increase in wages through militant struggle in 2018. She also pointed out the organizational weaknesses and called for a revamping of the organization for consolidation and expansion.

Shobha Sinha, General Secretary, placed the report and Ruksana Kazmi, Treasurer placed the accounts. Eight delegates participated in the discussion.

The conference was greeted by Ganesh Shankar Singh, General Secretary, State CITU. Sanjay Chatterjee, Treasurer and Anupam Kumar Secretary CITU also attended the conference.

After the reply, the report and accounts were passed unanimously.

The conference elected a 41 member state committee with 21 office bearers with Sonikumar as President, Shobha Sinha as Working President, Md Yusuf as General Secretary and Ruksana Kazmi as Treasurer.

Apart from developing state level struggles on long pending demands of increase in wages and promotion, the conference decided to organize a state level convention on 14 August 2019 and follow up action against malnutrition and ill health in Muzaffarpur where more than 150 children have died due to Encephalitis. The Conference also decided to increase the membership to 10000 in 2019.

*(Report by Anupam Kumar)*

## **ASHA Workers Picket District Collectorates in Andhra Pradesh**

Under the banner of the Andhra Pradesh ASHA Workers Union (CITU) on 15 July 2019 thousands of ASHA workers organized picketing at 13 district collectorates in the state. They raised militant slogans, demanding immediate payment of their pending dues and implementation of the government announcement of Rs 10,000 as monthly honorarium for ASHA workers.

*(Report from K.Dhanalakshmi)*

## **Statewide Demonstrations by ASHA workers in MP**

On 15 July 2019, while the state assembly was in session, thousands of ASHA workers organized rallies and demonstrations at 17 District Collectorates in the state of Madhya Pradesh. They submitted memoranda addressed to the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister to the district authorities.

In Indore the union leaders submitted a memorandum to Tulsi Sehrawat, the Health and Family Welfare Minister, and had discussions with her on their demands.

*(Report from AT Padmanabhan)*

## **Haryana ASHA Workers Continue Struggle**

During the fortnight from 20 June to 5 July 2019, at the call of the ASHA Workers Union in Haryana, dharnas were organized at the Community Health Centres (CHC) in different districts. The workers were demanding implementation of the Prime Ministers announcement in September 2018 about doubling of ASHA incentives and fulfillment of the pending demands of the 21 July 2018 state government notification.

The dharnas were held at over 50 Community Health Centres in 16 districts, with 50 to 100 ASHA workers in each. Nearly 5000 ASHA workers participated in the dharnas.

It was decided that district level dharnas and demonstrations will be held at the residences of MLAs and ministers on 24 August.

*(Report from Surekha)*

# Dalits Under Attack

## Gujarat

The Hindutva brigade has now also trained its guns on dalits in Gujarat. After the 2002 carnage of Muslims, dalits are now facing the brunt of violence by right-wing forces.

On June 19, **a deputy sarpanch of a village in Botad district of Gujarat was killed by a group of upper caste men who**, according to the victim's son, **"cannot stand the fact that dalit get elected as sarpanch"**. Manji Solanki was attacked with clubs and iron pipes when he was returning home on his motorcycle. This was the fifth attempt on his life by upper caste men since 2010. He died on way to a hospital.

Days after this, **a dalit man was beaten up in Una in Gir Somnath** district. According to 29-year-old Piyush Sarvaiya, he was abused and assaulted by two persons on June 27 when he was passing by Una town on his motorcycle. The accused included a convict in the murder case of Sarvaiya's brother. *"They told me that court had sentenced them to imprisonment till their last breath and they were not afraid of any further punishment."*

Una had hit the headlines in 2016 when an upper caste mob assaulted seven members of a dalit family for skinning a dead cow, triggering a nationwide outrage. During the 2016 attack, four of the Sarvaiya brothers were stripped, tied to the back of a car and beaten with sticks and iron rods, while some of the attackers filmed the assault.

**Another Dalit youth, Solanki**, from Gandhidham in Kutch, married Urmila Zala almost six months ago but her parents had brought her back to Varmor on the outskirts of Ahmedabad in May. Urmila, who is two months pregnant, is missing.

Solanki then sought help from the 181 Abhayam counselling team to convince his father-in-law Dashrathsinh Zala to let Urmila return with him to Kutch. The team with Solanki had one woman constable as well.

As the counsellor negotiated with Urmila's parents, Solanki waited in a government car outside the house. The counselling lasted for around 20 minutes. After the counselling ended with Dashrathsinh and Urmila, the councilor and the police escort left the house and approached the car. At that moment, **eight people along with Dashrathsinh arrived at the spot, attacked him with swords.**

## Rajasthan

**A 35-year-old Dalit woman in Rajasthan's Churu has claimed that she was gang raped, tortured and had her nails pulled out by nine policemen**, including the station house officer (SHO) of the Sardarshahar police station, for several days after she was taken into custody on 3 July . She stated that a woman constable tried to shield her but to no avail.

She said that her 22-year-old brother-in-law died in police custody on 6 July and the police burned his body late on 7 July to remove all evidence. The police had taken him into custody on 30 June in a six-month-old case of theft.

## Uttar Pradesh

The husband of BJP MLA Rajesh Misra's daughter, who approached the Allahabad High Court seeking protection, was beaten up outside the court on July 15. The couple has been on the run since the announcement of their marriage last week.

Sakshi Misra, 23, and her husband Ajitesh Kumar, 29, had alleged a threat to their life from her father for marrying Kumar, a Dalit man.

The high court has given directions to the police for the couple's protection. The couple was present in court.

Sakshi had on 10 June posted two videos on social media in which she is heard telling her father that he should let her live in peace with her husband. Sakshi had also appealed to other MPs and MLAs to not side with her father, also known as Pappu Bhartaul, on the issue. She also appealed for police protection, alleging that she feared a threat to her life from her father, brother and their associate.

In the petition filed in court, the couple said that the father is unhappy with the marriage as Sakshi Misra is a Brahmin and her husband a Dalit. The petition said the MLA and the police should allow them to live in peace as they are both adults and had married out of their free will. The MLA rejected his daughter's charge.

## The New Ramdhun- “Jai Sri Ram”



On June 18 early morning, 22-year-old Tabrez Ansari was returning home from Jamshedpur on his motorcycle when a group of men accosted him in Seraikela Kharsawan district in **Jharkhand**. They accused him of stealing a motorcycle. He was then **tied to an electricity pole, beaten up and forced to chant ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and ‘Jai Hanuman’**. A video of the incident shows Ansari chanting the slogans and pleading with the mob to stop the assault. But the beating continued. **Ansari**

**died** of injuries on June 22.

Two days later, a 40-year-old **madrassa teacher in Delhi** was hit by a car for refusing to chant ‘Jai Shri Ram’ on June 20. Maulana Momin was injured and had to be hospitalised. On the same day, **another madrassa teacher** was punched, kicked and pushed off a local train **in Kolkata** for refusing to chant ‘Jai Shri Ram’.

A week after, a 25-year-old **Muslim taxi driver**, Faisal Usman Khan, was beaten up, abused and forced to chant ‘Jai Shri Ram’ **in Maharashtra’s Thane**. On June 24, Khan was on his way to Mumbai when his car broke down. *“I switched on the parking lights and was trying to restart the car when three men on a scooter came from behind and started banging the windows. They wanted to know why I had stopped my vehicle in the middle of the road... The accused started hitting me with wires and when I screamed out loud ‘Ya Allah’, I was told to chant ‘Jai Shri Ram’ if I wanted to be spared,”* he said.

The list is growing every day with more such incidents. It reveals how much the right-wing forces have been emboldened by the victory of Narendra Modi’s BJP in the April-May Lok Sabha election.

### Madhya Pradesh

Over 100 villagers **tied 25 people with a rope and paraded them through a two-km stretch** to a police station in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh on July 7 **for allegedly transporting cows** to Maharashtra.

A video of the incident showed several villagers carrying sticks and forcing the alleged cattle-transporters **to do sit-ups holding their ears amid cries of “Gau Mata Ki Jai”**.

The incident happened in Sanwalikheda village, about 60 kilometres from the district headquarters.

## Labelled Foreigner, Assam Woman Set Free After 3 Years

Three years after being labelled a 'foreigner' and sent to a detention camp in Assam, a 59-year-old woman has been released with the police admitting she was a victim of mistaken identity and that officials had picked up the wrong person.

Madhubala Mandal, a widow, returned home June 26 evening, shortly after being freed from a camp for illegal immigrants in Kokrajhar.

She was released after police admitted before a Foreigners' Tribunal that they had sent Madhubala

Mandal to the detention camp instead of a Madhumala Das who was declared a foreigner by the Tribunal in 2016. Madhumala Das had died long before 2016.

Visuals of a frail Mandal, looking much older than her years, told reporters that she had tried to convince the police that she was not the person they were looking for but they did not pay heed. Madhubala was the sole earning member of her family, comprising of her hearing impaired daughter, who is abandoned by her husband and a 10 year old granddaughter. The three years of detention have affected Madhubala's health so much that she is left with no strength to do manual work as she did earlier.

In May, Kargil war veteran Mohammad Sanaullah was picked up and sent to a detention camp in Goalpara district after a tribunal declared him as a 'foreigner'.

Following his family's writ petition along with an interlocutory application, the Gauhati high court granted him bail and he was released from the detention camp.

According to a statement issued by the state coordinator of NRC, 1,02,462 persons were declared ineligible during the process of verification carried out by the Local Registrars of Citizens Registration.

The list is being updated for the first time since 1951 to identify illegal migration into Assam. The NRC is being updated under the monitoring of the Supreme Court and the final list is scheduled to be released on July 31.

There are reports that many people have been unable to report for verification due to the widespread floods in Assam which have made it impossible to reach the scrutiny centres.



# Why Is There A Water Crisis in India?

Subodh Varma

**M**anagarhi village is located just a few kilometers west of River Yamuna in UP's Mathura district. Located near a river and within one of world's biggest river systems, the Ganga basin, one would think that water would not be a problem here.

But a visit to the village brought a stunning surprise. All the villagers use bottled water for drinking and cooking! The ground water is too salty for use. The river is too far and in any case, its water is not drinkable. There is no piped supply of course.

The village is part of Naujhil block which has been declared a "dark zone". This means that govt. has forbidden use of electricity to pump out ground water. Why? Because the groundwater has been so depleted by withdrawal that even annual rains cannot replenish it. Till a few decades ago, water was not a problem. The river used to recharge the ground water, besides rains. But now, the river is depleted and a bund was built to prevent floods, leading to the present crisis.

The story of this village symbolizes the tragedy of India's water woes. Rivers no longer carry as much water as they used to, or they are too polluted. Groundwater is falling precipitously, so much so that nearly one third of the country's over 5500 blocks. The Jal Shakti ministry has officially declared 255 districts and 1,597 blocks as 'water stressed'. In the absence of govt. investment in building irrigation systems, farmers are dependent on pumps to draw groundwater for irrigation. This not only depletes the groundwater reservoirs but also pushes up the cost of production because they have to use diesel or electricity for the pumps.

Urban areas too are facing severe water shortages. The urban affairs ministry has declared 756 municipal areas "water stressed" out of a total of 4,378 municipal areas in the country. In cities like Chennai and Bengaluru, there is perpetual water shortage, while Delhi – an otherwise pampered metropolis - faces a crisis every summer.

Ironically, during the four-month long monsoon season, the country veers to the opposite end – there are devastating floods in several states almost every year, displacing millions of people, destroying crops, houses, cattle, and taking a toll on human lives. This year itself, about 70 lakh people have been displaced in floods in eastern UP, Bihar, W.Bengal and Assam. Last year, an unprecedented flood had hit Kerala. This is the other side of water mismanagement – gross neglect of surface water storage and canalization deprives people of water in non-rainy months and leaves no place for water to go to in the rainy months.

Clearly, the situation is going to get worse, if things continue like this. Here's why.

## India's Water Equation

Total fresh water resources in India are estimated to be 4000 billion cubic meters (BCM). [One cubic meter = 10,000 liters] After accounting for losses due to evaporation and unusable water like brackish water or swamp water, total usable water available is 1123 BCM. [See Table 1] That's the limit of India's water resources.

<b>Table 1: Water Resources (BCM)</b>		
<b>Total Fresh Water</b>		<b>4000</b>
<b>Usable water</b>		<b>1123</b>
<b>of which</b>	<b>Ground water</b>	<b>395</b>
	<b>Surface water</b>	<b>728</b>

Total water consumption in India was estimated at 829 BCM in 2006. [See Table 2] It is projected to increase to 1093 BCM by 2025. That means, in just a few years, India is going to reach its limit of water consumption.

Another aspect of the water equation needs to be remembered. Unlike other countries, India's primary water consumption is in agriculture – for irrigation. About 83% of water is used for watering crops while about 12% is used by industries and 5% domestically.

[See Table 3] This means that shortage of water is going to hit the farmers most, and it is going to affect food production disastrously.

Year	Use
2006	829
2025	1093

	Agriculture	Industry	Domestic
<b>India</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>
Europe	33	54	13
World	69	23	8

Increase in population has, of course, contributed to the situation reaching these dire straits, but a closer look will reveal gross mismanagement and neglect by successful governments, coupled with an unbridled destruction of

resources as if there is no tomorrow. Some of the features of this tragic policy are given below.

### **Irrigation**

After the initial years of expansion of irrigation through public investment, successive govts. have become more and more reluctant to undertake irrigation projects. This is reflected in the steady decline in capital investment in agriculture. As of now, about 55% of India's cultivated land is still dependent on rains. How does this affect the water situation?

Firstly, a large amount of rainfall could have been collected in farm ponds, percolation tanks, water reservoirs and construction of small and medium size dams for use in irrigation. In the absence of this strategy, only about 18% of the total rainfall over the whole country is used while 48% is flowing into the rivers and from there, out into the seas. The impounded water could also have helped in recharging groundwater aquifers.

Secondly, in the absence of surface water systems for irrigation, farmers have been forced to use groundwater. Pumpset manufacturing companies pushed the adoption of pumps since the 1980s to such an extent that the number of pump sets (both diesel and electric) in use have exploded from about 1.2 crore in 1985-86 to 3.4 crore by 2010-11, according to the All India Input Survey, which is done as part of the Agriculture Census. By now the number of pump sets would have gone up even more.

There were two consequences of the use of groundwater: depletion of groundwater resources increased exponentially and costs of farming increased.

Studies by NASA using satellite imagery show that the Indus basin, which includes the high food producing states of Punjab and Haryana, is one of the most stressed aquifers (groundwater reservoirs) in the world. If the current trends continue, by 2030 nearly 60% of Indian aquifers will be in a critical condition. This means that some 25% of the agriculture production will be at risk – a devastating scenario.

### **Urban Mismanagement and Unequal Water Sharing**

India's cities are teetering on the brink of an unimaginable water crisis because of unplanned growth and low priority to provision of safe drinking water. Wastage, due to leaks in the supply systems, as also wasteful consumption practices is a serious and untackled problem.

But an equally big problem is that water use in urban areas is highly unjust, biased in favour of the rich sections. Localities where the upper middle class and the rich stay are getting as much

as 6-8 times more water than the poorer localities. In Delhi, for example, the New Delhi Municipal Committee area, where all the ministers, bureaucrats and super rich stay, gets about 375 liters of water per person per day. On the other hand, poorer localities get as little as 30-40 liters per person per day.

Consumption of water is thus highly unequal. While the rich use water to wash their cars, water their lawns and gardens, even give baths to their pets, the poor families have to get up at 3 o'clock in the night to fill up a few buckets of water for their daily use.

Some cities have made attempts to use rainwater but this has not been done seriously enough and the laggards are the govt. and the rich themselves. Delhi, for example, receives 690 billion liters of rainfall every year. Collecting and storing even 25% of this would yield 172 billion liters. With an average demand of about 5 billion liters per day, this could just be sufficient to tide over a hot waterless summer month. But this collection cannot be done individually by poorer sections. It has to be done by the government. Rainwater harvesting can play an important role in supplementing municipal supplies and taking the load off the precious groundwater resources.

### **Privatisation of Water**

Far from adopting measures to provide safe drinking water to all, attempts are continuously made to privatise water. It has been vociferously argued by many apologists of private companies that if water is provided free then there will be wastage and excessive use. If it is privatized (like electricity supply) then charges will be levied and everybody will start conserving water. However, this is spurious and unjust logic, being deployed in order to make profits out of what is an essential human need.

In as many as 180 cities in 35 countries across the world, privatized water supply to cities has been reverted back to municipality control after citizens faced immense hardships, high bills, extortion and punitive actions by the private service providers.

But privatization of water is not just about municipal water supplies alone. There are several insidious ways in which water is being turned into a saleable commodity. The govts. have been helping by not providing enough water to thirsty people, and by not making available sufficient surface water for irrigation.

According to industry estimates, 23,532 million litres of bottled water will be sold by bottled water companies in India in 2019. It is estimated that this costs about Rs.41,000 crore. If safe drinking water was available everywhere then there would be no need for people to spend this much money on buying water. Note that bottled water means both, half litre and one litre bottles as well as 20 or 25 litre bottles or jerry cans that are often bought by families for collective domestic use. Apart from this, water is also used for making soft drinks (carbonated and non-carbonated). Again, industry estimates show that in 2019, some 499.3 million litres of carbonated soft drinks and 4989.03 million litres of non-carbonated soft drinks would be consumed by Indians. That's a total of 5488 million litres. So, roughly that much water is being used up in making this amount of soft drinks. About Rs.30,000 crore are spent by Indians to buy these soft drinks, and the consumption is increasing every year, backed by powerful and all pervasive advertising by global companies like Coca Cola and Pepsico. Industry experts say that per capita consumption of soft drinks in India was "only" 44 bottles per year as opposed to US where it is 1496 bottles or Brazil (537 bottles)! The companies are planning to push their sales to 84 bottles per capita per year by 2021, according to one report.

According to studies, it takes 1.9 litres of water to make one small bottle of Coca-Cola. So, actually, double the amount of water is being used up by these companies. If you add the

amount of water needed to make sugar – an essential ingredient of most soft drinks – then the amount of water consumed goes up to an incredible 400 litres, according to India Resource Centre, an NGO.

In several places, villagers have staunchly opposed setting up of soft drinks plants because they drain away all the ground water. In Plachimada, Kerala, for example, where a Coca Cola plant was located, local wells had dried up because of drought and the over-withdrawal of groundwater allegedly by the plant, forcing many residents to rely on water supplies trucked in daily by the government.

Citing excessive groundwater pumping, in 2014, government officials ordered closed the Mehdiganj plant in the Uttar Pradesh. Coca-Cola operates 58 water-intensive bottling plants in India. Similar reports have emerged about Pepsico and other fizzy drink makers.

### **What Should be Done?**

If India's future generations are to live in peace, it is necessary for the present government to rapidly undertake programmes to build irrigation systems, develop watersheds and boost forestation so that surface water (rain and water in various water-bodies) is conserved and used efficiently. It should also do away with discriminatory distribution of drinking water and put curbs on wasteful use by the rich. Since climate change is affecting rainfall patterns as well as river flows, these measures need to be taken urgently. Simply having a new ministry with a new name (as the new Modi govt. has done by merging two existing ministries) will not help unless there is a serious vision. Modi's declaration that piped drinking water will be made available to all in the next five years also appears to be a hollow promise because it is estimated that this will require Rs.60,000 crore just for putting the systems in place while actual allocation for the drinking water mission in this years Budget is only Rs.10,000 crore.

## **Jharna Das Baidya Stands Up To Amit Shah**

**A**fter coming to power again, the BJP is now more arrogant than ever and is shamelessly trying to purchase MPs, MLAs and various celebrities associated with other parties, using its massive corporate-donated money power and influence. But where ideology is strong, people resist.

Recently Jharna Das Baidya, CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP from Tripura and AIDWA state secretary and CEC member proved this when she made public how Amit Shah told her that since the days of the Left are over she should now join the BJP.

Jharna hit back and said that she had come to meet him not as BJP President but formally as the Union Home Minister, to inform him of the violent and anti-democratic activities of his party in Tripura in the panchayat elections and to demand justice. She told him clearly that as long as a single CPI(M) member remained in Tripura, they would fight tooth and nail against the BJP. This firm stand forced Amit Shah to retreat and express regret.

We are proud of Comrade Jharna and thousands of others in Tripura who are standing up so bravely for their ideals, in the face of savage repression. We strongly condemn this totally unethical behaviour of a person who is the second most powerful person in the government today. We think he has brought shame to his office through his behaviour.

# ILO Joins Hands with Modi Government to Reduce Workers Minimum Wage

J. S. Majumdar

In the ongoing world economic crisis situation, there is a rightward political shift having a aggressive neoliberal economic agenda for the corporates and against all sections of the working people with cuts in wages, social security, subsidies, employment, rights; and with increased taxation - as designed by the international finance capital - combined with country-specific divisive agenda in the capitalist world. The reflection of this trend is seen in the rise of Trump in USA, his replicas in other countries and in the rise and consolidation of Modi-led dispensation of the communal-corporate combine in India.

In this background, it is not surprising that the UN agencies like International Labour Organisation (ILO) did not remain untouched by it. Two recent examples, both on workers minimum wages, establish this fact. One is about ILO which, completely bypassing labour, joined hands with the Modi government to prepare a report to give legitimacy in reducing the workers' minimum wages in India. The other is about ILO constituting an enquiry committee and condemning Maduro government for increasing workers minimum wages in Venezuela. Using double standards, ILO condemned the Government of Venezuela for 'ignoring the Chambers of Commerce and tripartite mechanism' on raising workers minimum wage; but, conveniently ignored the trade unions in India and the tripartite mechanism while sitting in Modi government's committee and fixing workers minimum wage.

## **ILO's direct role in reducing workers minimum wages in India**

Not stopping there, ILO in Delhi called a special meeting with the central trade unions on an agenda for "*an informal exchange of views on the Government of India 'Report of the Expert Committee for Determining the Methodology for Fixing the National Minimum Wage', which used an innovative methodology to estimate a needs-based minimum wage.*" This meeting was attended by seven central trade unions - INTUC, BMS, HMS, AITUC, CITU, AIUTUC and NFITU. CITU was represented by its national secretariat member Karumalayam and its Delhi state general secretary Anurag Saxena.

In the meeting, ILO officials took great pains to explain in detail the 'merits' of Modi government's 'Expert Committee' report and the "*innovative methodology*" adopted by it. Unfortunately for the ILO, however, all seven central trade unions, including RSS-affiliated BMS, unanimously rejected the so called 'Expert Committee' report and its "*innovative methodology to estimate a need-based minimum wage*". Karumalayam questioned the very basis of ILO's participation in the 'Expert Committee' and the need of a new methodology when Indian Labour Conferences (ILCs), all tripartite bodies and the Supreme Court have upheld the Current Methodology. Anurag Saxena questioned the timing of this 'Expert Committee' report when the Delhi government's notification on minimum wage, based on the Current Methodology of calculation, is pending before the Supreme Court. AITUC representative pointed out that in this regard ILO officials themselves violated ILO Convention 131 on fixation of minimum wage and have gone beyond their terms of reference. BMS representatives highlighted various fallacies in the methodology itself.

It will not be out of place to note that while the workers in India this year are celebrating the centenary of the first all India trade union centre and golden jubilee of CITU commemorating the

struggles and sacrifices pursuing immediate demands, for advancement and for revolutionary social transformation to end class exploitation, ILO is also celebrating the centenary of its formation, within two years after the Great October Revolution by the working class and establishment of the first socialist state; as an alternative instrument for the labour for continuation and stability of class division and exploitation.

Following this, the Union finance minister's pre-budget 2019-20 meeting with the trade unions, scheduled on 15 June, has '*Ensuring minimum wages for all workforce*' as a theme for discussion, obviously for clearing the ground to enforce the reduction in minimum wages as a big boost for the defaulting corporates of NPAs.

### **Deception route to cut minimum wage**

Modi government's Expert Committee report, published on 14 February, 2019 using the "*innovative methodology to estimate a need-based minimum wage*", as ILO describes it, is a big fraud being played on the vast marginalized sections of workers. Like using new EPF accounts for projection of higher rate of 'formal employment', new GDP series to project higher economic growth and fudging facts with other manufactured data; Modi government adopted the deception route to cut workers minimum wage to favour the corporates through this "*Innovative Methodology*" replacing the Current Methodology of calculation of minimum wages under Minimum Wages Act, 1948 which evolved out of about 40 years of efforts since the constitution of the Indian republic and struggle for their effective implementation since then.

### **Current Methodology**

Under the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India and on the basis of Fair Wages Committee recommendations; the tripartite 15<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour Conference (ILC) in 1957 decided on the Current Methodology of calculation having - (i) Workers family of 3 members consumption unit; (ii) 2700 calories per unit in balanced food as per Dr. Aykroyd formula; (iii) 72 yards of cloth per family per annum; (iv) House rent as charged by the government for low income group housing; and (v) additional 20% of (ii)+(iii)+(iv) for fuel, lighting and other miscellaneous expenses. The Supreme Court of India has approved this Current Methodology in their judgement in Raptakos Brett case in 1992, but by adding one more criterion as (vi) Additional 25% to the total of (ii)+(iii)+(iv)+(v) for children's education, medical treatment, recreation, festivals and ceremonies. Thus, the total of (ii)+(iii)+(iv)+(v)+(vi) becomes the minimum wage.

### **"Innovative Methodology" of Government – ILO**

No doubt, the Expert Committee report's methodology of calculation is innovative, but only for the purpose of cutting workers minimum wage.

For fudging facts, the Expert Committee calculated a workers family consumption unit as 3.6 instead of 3 as in the Current Methodology. Yet, a worker's total minimum wage, at current price level, comes to Rs.8,892 - Rs.11,622 per month, with regional variations, as against Rs.18,000 per month at January, 2016 price level calculated by 7<sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission (CPC) using the Current Methodology, which Modi government at the Centre and most of the State governments have already accepted and implemented and the central trade unions and federations made it as one of the major demands for implementation in all sectors – public and private – across the country and resorted to countrywide strikes for it. Even 7<sup>th</sup> CPC lowered minimum wage to Rs.18,000 from actual Rs.23,000 when calculated on the basis of Current Methodology.

What were the innovative methods which the Expert Committee used to cut workers minimum wages by about half (?) - (i) First, by reducing per day per consumption unit calorie intake from

2700 to 2400; (ii) Second, by taking very low prices of the food items; (iii) Third, by removing 20% of total wage for fuel, light and on miscellaneous expenses and 25% of the total as per Supreme Court judgement as in the Current Methodology and (iv) by replacing all non-food expenditures, including house rent, - as in (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) in the Current Methodology - into two broad categories as (a) Essential Non-Food Items, including house rent, and (b) Non-Food Items; and then calculating the expenses on these using empirical methods and on presumptions.

### **Minimum wage before the Supreme Court**

Publication and timing of the Expert Committee report has to be seen in the background of employers' organisations challenging in Delhi High Court the minimum wage notification dated 3 March, 2017 by the Delhi government. High Court scrapped the notification against which Delhi government has gone to Supreme Court. CITU Delhi State committee is an intervener party.

In their interim order of 31 October, 2018, the Supreme Court turned down the Delhi High Court judgement, restored the minimum wages notification temporarily and ordered implementation of the notified minimum wages effective 1 November, 2018 till disposal of the case, ordered Delhi government to constitute a Minimum Wage Advisory Board strictly under the provision of the Act and on its advice prepare a fresh draft of minimum wages notification and place the same before the Supreme Court for scrutiny and approval.

The notified minimum wage for an unskilled worker in Delhi, calculated on the basis of Current Methodology is Rs.14,000 per month at January 2017 price level as against Expert Committee's Rs.11,622 in January 2019 price level. The next date of hearing is 2 July, 2019.

### **Design to implement Code on Wages**

The Code on Wages Bill, the first of the four labour codes proposing to replace all 44 existing labour laws, was placed in the now dissolved 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. The Code on Wages Bill inter alia proposes to scrap Minimum Wages Act, 1948. Current Methodology of calculating minimum wages is an exercise to implement Minimum Wages Act. With scrapping of Minimum Wages Act, the Current Methodology will also have no relevance. The Expert Committee's methodology will be implemented then.

With implementation of Expert Committee's methodology of calculation of minimum wage the question will arise about the 7<sup>th</sup> CPC minimum wage beneficiary employees of Central and State governments. Will there be NPS like discrimination for the governments' new recruits getting lower minimum wages as and when Expert Committee's recommendation on minimum wages are implemented.

The Modi government has already taken ILO on board for assault on workers minimum wages in the coming days.

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# CITU Denounces the Destructive Move for Privatisation of Air India

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions strongly denounces the destructive move of the Government of India for privatization of Air India at any cost and by any means.

In its previous regime, the Modi government tried its best to conclude the privatization deal, invited Expression of Interests (EoI) for the same from interested buyers but failed to get any response. And in its second incarnation, the BJP government is planning to sell Air India, piece by piece, i.e., by selling its profit making subsidiary units like Alliance Air, Air India Express, AITSL, AIESL etc., to facilitate cheaper sale of AIR INDIA to private corporate players, both foreign and domestic.

The privatization is being justified by the present government on the plea that Air India has become unsustainable owing to heavy loss and indebtedness. This is nothing but a bogus plea. The loss and debt burden of Air India has not been the result of imprudence or failure of the concerned management; it is the atrocious interference of successive ministries in compelling Air India for unprepared merger and purchase of a huge number of Aircrafts without due diligence, benefitting the foreign suppliers, which had landed the National Carrier into loss and heavy indebtedness.

But despite all problems and constraints, Air India has been able to come back to operating profit consistently during most of the years under the last BJP government. It has never defaulted in servicing the huge debt burden on time with the banks unlike many major private corporate majors who are going to be the prospective buyers of dismantled Air India.

The entire privatization exercise of Air India, if seen in detail, as reported by the national print media, exposes the dubiousness to serve the private corporates including foreign majors, severely compromising the national interests.

The national carrier is being sold in pieces viz., Air India, AI-Sat, AI-Express etc and around 50 per cent of the debt burden would remain with a Special Purpose Vehicle-AI Asset Holding, keeping noncore real estate with it. This SPV along with substantial debt burden will remain with the government.

Destructive ploy to privatise the National Carrier in play in the name of “big bang reform” under the NDA-II regime has become clear—push the PSU into the red by imposing wrong and sabotaging decisions and then hand it over to private hands with its huge assets-which are all national assets.

CITU condemns such a destructive decision of the BJP government to privatise the National Carrier, AIR INDIA and demands of the government to restrain from such a retrograde move. All the eight unions of Air India Employees under the Joint Forum of Air India Against Privatisation have jointly conveyed their strong opposition to such a privatization move to CMD, Air India on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019 and have been preparing for united struggle.

CITU calls upon working people and their unions irrespective of affiliations to unite and resist such destructive ploy of the government at the centre.

## So Called Labour Law Reforms of BJP Government

CITU denounces the BJP Government, that is in a hurry to “pay-back” their corporate bosses through their hectic move of so called labour-law reforms which are intended to replace the existing labour laws by four Labour Codes, and are meticulously designed for removing and/or grossly diluting all rights and provisions of protection for workers in the existing labour laws, under the plea of “ease of doing business” for the corporate.

On Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019, the Union Labour Minister, along with others, announced through a Press Conference along with a PIB release that the **Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Bill 2019** has been cleared by the Union Cabinet. The Bill repealed 13 existing Labour laws and selectively picked up only the provisions advantageous to employers from these Acts for incorporation of the Code Bill while grossly diluting and/or tampering with all the provisions pertaining to rights and protection of the workers in general. Even on Health and Safety related matters, the Code has so articulated the provisions that the workers and their unions cannot assert their opinions and rights for proper enforcement or establish the accountability of the employers for violation of even the basic health and safety provisions, which are a common and daily phenomenon in the workplaces across the sectors throughout the country, leading to loss of lives and disabling injuries almost every day. Such a move on the part of the government, totally ignoring the vehement and concrete opposition of all the central trade unions against such an anti-worker and pro-employer exercise, is totally condemnable and must be opposed tooth and nail.

In the said Press Conference dated 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019, the Minister boastfully stated that the BJP government is magnanimous enough to clear the **Code on Wages Bill 2019** and also decide a **National Floor Level Minimum Wage of Rs 178/- per day** (Rs 4628/- per month for 26 days) below which no state government will be allowed to fix the minimum wage for workers. This announcement itself. exposes the bluff. To compel the state government in that regard there must be a statutory arrangement and the Code on Wages Bill does not have any such provision.

Secondly, boasting of magnanimity, the government, in declaring floor level minimum wages at Rs 178/- per day (Rs 4628/- per month) is utterly shameless and ridiculous. Already in 31 locations of the country, states and union territory together, the existing minimum wage rates are way above Rs 178/-per day. This announcement of the government will directly provoke and inspire the concerned state governments and employers to further suppress the minimum wage to lower it to so called National Floor Level for Ease of Loot by the employers

The Government did not bother to implement the concrete formulae of Minimum Wage (based on 2700 calorie intake etc) decided unanimously by 15<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour Conference along with the Supreme Court Judgment in the Raptakos Brett case in 1992, which was again unanimously recommended by 44<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour Conference and unanimously reiterated by 45<sup>th</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour Conference (2014) in which the government of India was a party. According to the said formula, the Minimum Wage works out to Rs 18000/- per month (Rs 692.3 per day) as on 2016, as recommended by the 7<sup>th</sup> Pay Commission. Further the Labour Ministry headed by the same Labour Minister had appointed an Expert Committee in January 2018 to decide the Minimum Wage and its methodology. The said Expert Committee even after tampering with the ILC recommendation of 2700 calorie intake to make it 2400 arbitrarily, and also calculating the food

and other requirement on the basis of 2012 prices, did recommend a minimum wage ranging from Rs 375/- to Rs 447/- per day (Rs 9750/- to Rs 11,622 per month). But the employers/ corporate lobby did not allow the so called magnanimous government to decide the floor level minimum wage as per the recommendation of its own Expert Committee and the servile Government ended up with the shameless announcement of Rs 178/- per day. This is the real face of the so called inclusive development loudly touted by the BJP government in its second incarnation.

The CITU condemns such an anti-worker decision and move of the BJP government on Minimum Wages and Labour Law Reform and calls upon the workers and their unions of all affiliations to unitedly oppose and resist such a disastrous move and to prepare for countrywide united struggle in the days to come.

## Stop Privatisation of Indian Railways

The CITU opposes the privatisation measures incorporated in the 100 days Action Plan proposed by the Ministry of Railways with the approval of the Minister of Railways. The Railway Board has directed that immediate action to be taken to implement the Action Plan by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019.

The Action Plan proposes operating private passenger trains. Within 100 days 2 passenger trains will be offered to IRCTC which would provide ticketing and on board services. These trains will run on the important routes like Golden Quadrilateral and Diagonals and connecting major cities. It is reported that the government wants to hand over running of premier trains including the Rajdhani and Shatabdi express trains to private operators, for which tenders would be floated within four months.

Hiking Railway fares is also on the cards. The government wants to reduce the subsidies through a 'Give it up' campaign. It is important to note that overwhelming majority of the railway passengers today belong to the poor and low income sections. Providing cheap and affordable travel is the Constitutional responsibility of the government. Reducing subsidies and raising fares is nothing but a ploy to favour the private operators who would be operating the trains only for profits. The government which has come to power with the votes of the common people and the poor, has, within less than a month started imposing burdens on the common people, just to pay back their bosses, the big Corporates, domestic and foreign.

Another proposal in the Action Plan is the corporatisation of the production units. The 7 production units including the associated workshops are proposed to be 'hived off' to the 'Indian Railway Rolling Stock Company'. This is nothing but an attempt to hand over and outsource production to the private players killing our public sector's indigenous manufacturing capacity.

The proposal to consult the trade unions appears to be only an eye wash. Till today, the Modi government, in its earlier avatar as well as since it returned to power, has been blatantly ignoring the voice of the trade unions on many issues. In fact all the central trade unions have been consistently opposing privatisation of the public sector undertakings. But this government has already declared privatisation of 46 PSUs, despite this opposition

CITU calls upon the people and all its affiliated unions and federations to oppose the privatisation of the cheapest mode of transport available today for the people and to unitedly resist the move.

It also calls upon all the unions of the railway employees to strongly oppose the privatisation of Indian railways in any form and mobilise their entire strength through united actions to stop such disastrous measures

## Protest at Bihar Bhavan Against Children's Death

The Delhi state units of AIDWA, CITU, DYFI, SFI and DSMM staged a joint protest demonstration at Bihar Bhavan in New Delhi on 18 June against the complete failure of the BJP-JD(U) government in Bihar in preventing the recent deaths of 157 children in the hospitals, and more unaccounted at homes, at Muzaffarpur due to an Encephalitis epidemic. These deaths reveal acute infrastructural deficiencies in government hospitals and the lackadaisical attitude of the government in preventing and dealing with the epidemic.



Further, the state health minister displayed his abject insensitivity saying that '*it was not a big issue*' and showed his complete failure in managing the health services for the people of Bihar. These deaths of malnourished children, mostly belonging to BPL families, also expose the collapsing PDS and absence of other economic parameters for the marginalized sections of the people in the state.

A delegation of the protesters met the Bihar government's OSD at Bihar Bhavan and submitted a memorandum demanding immediate preventive measures, improvement in hospital services, supply of nutritional food to BPL families and financial aid and compensation to the affected families.

Outside Bihar Bhavan, the demonstrators were addressed by AIDWA national general secretary Mariam Dhawale and state leaders - Asha Sharma (AIDWA), Virendra Gaur (CITU), Utkarsh (SFI) and Brahmajeet (DSMM).

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# Rush Funds in Support of People in Assam Affected by Devastating Floods



In Assam,  
30 out of 33 districts are under floodwaters.  
36 people have lost their lives and 54 lakh people are displaced.  
17 lakh children have been affected by the floods.  
The loss of homes and property has been immense.  
90 percent of Kaziranga National Park is under water.  
The water level of the Brahmaputra river has been rising menacingly above the danger level across the state. Roads, bridges, culverts and other infrastructure have been damaged at various places.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions calls upon the working class in the country to stand in solidarity with the people of Assam, who have been continuously facing devastation under floods. All possible support and help must be extended to the flood victims. The Assam State Committee of CITU is fully involved in rescue and relief operations.

**CITU calls upon all state committees, federations and affiliated unions, and all concerned citizens to urgently raise funds and send these immediately to the Assam state committee of CITU through money transfer to their bank account given below, details of which are given below, with an intimation to the CITU Centre.**

## Details of the bank account of Assam state committee of CITU

**ASSAM STATE COMMITTEE OF CITU  
Account Number: 0303010014036  
UBI Branch ULUBARI  
IFSC- UTBIOULU319**

# WORKERS FIGHT BACK



Maharashtra



Madhya Pradesh



Tamilnadu



Bihar



Jammu & Kashmir



Assam