

# The Voice of the Working Woman



# Protest Calls

The Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions in rock-like solidarity with the Farmers' United Struggle

1. **3 December 2020** - one or two hour-long road blockades in every district and tehsil in the country.
2. **8th December 2020** - 'Janata Curfew/ Bharat Bandh' - Organise rasta roko, rail roko and demonstrations across the country burn the effigies of the Modi government and its crony corporate masters Ambani and Adani.
3. **12 December 2020** - Block all toll plazas across the country and make them 'toll free'
4. **12 December 2020** - Jam Delhi Jaipur Highway
5. **14 December 2020** - Huge Protest Demonstrations at District/ Local level local protest actions throughout the country. 'Delhi chalo' by the peasants from neighbouring states of Delhi
6. **Boycott Jio** and other product brands owned by Ambani/ Adani

Dear Readers,

Due to some unavoidable circumstances we could not publish the December issue of the Voice of the Working Woman on time. We regret the inconvenience caused.

- Editor

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## The Voice of the Working Woman

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# EDITORIAL

The farmers' protests across the country, since 26th November, have intensified. Braving the freezing Delhi cold thousands of farmers continue to protest at the borders of Delhi, now blocking all its entries. But the BJP government led by Modi remains adamant. Initially it has tried to suppress the movement by preventing the farmers from reaching Delhi. It treated them as criminals. It used water cannons, tear gas, lathis; it erected barricades, placed boulders on the roads and even dug up the highways to stop their tractors.

It has desperately tried all tricks in its hand to divide the farmers and their organisations, divert attention from their basic demands. It has tried to mislead the people, by enacting a drama of holding discussions without conceding to any of their basic demands. The BJP government has of course, also resorted to its favourite modus operandi in the face of opposition, of calling the protestors names, 'Khalistanis', 'Pakistanis', 'Terrorists', 'Anti nationals', 'Naxals', 'Tukde tukde gangs' etc and etc. But none of these tactics worked in the face of the commendable unity displayed by the farmers' organisations in the Samyukta Kisan Morcha leading the struggle now. They stood firm on their demand of repealing of the three Farm Acts and withdrawal of Electricity Amendment Bill 2020. They made it clear that nothing short of that would do.

In solidarity with the farmers and supporting each and every one of their programmes stood the working class of India. The joint platform of central trade unions and almost all the independent sectoral federations has been supporting the farmers' struggle since August 2020. Since 26th November, when the farmers' joint platform extended total support to the general strike and the trade union movement extended solidarity to the farmers' country wide protests, this mutual support and solidarity have been growing further. Scrapping of the three Farm Acts along with the Labour Codes was one of the major demands of the trade unions in their country wide general strike on 26th November. Thousands of workers are physically participating in the protest actions of the farmers across the country and also supporting their struggle in various other forms.

'Mazdoor kisan ekta zindabad' has become a spontaneous slogan in the gatherings of the workers and peasants, indicating the urge for unity and united struggles among these two sections of our society. It has to be noted that the Farm Acts do not impact the farmers alone. By facilitating large scale hoarding of essential commodities, creating artificial shortages, massive price rise, they would impact all sections of toiling people including workers, particularly the workers in the unorganised sector. When seen together with the Labour Codes that would sound death knell to the workers' social security and basic rights to organise and collective actions, it is clear that the BJP government has unleashed outright attacks on the toiling people, to serve its corporate cronies.

Arrogant with power, it is heinously using the lockdown associated with Covid 19 to rush through these measures ignoring all opposition. However, the growing struggles of almost all sections of the toiling people, witnessed throughout the year, despite the fear of Covid and the restrictions of lockdown show that people are not ready to tolerate these attacks on their livelihood and incomes any more.

The present unity of the workers and peasants' movements need to be further strengthened. United struggles have to be developed against the anti worker, anti farmer, anti people and anti national policies of the BJP government. Such struggles alone will pave the way for a change in the correlation of forces and a change in the policy regime in favour of the people.



## ***The Strike and Solidarity***

Historical struggles of the workers and peasants have been unfolding during the last few days since the country wide general strike called by the joint trade union movement on 26th November and the call for Delhi chalo and countrywide protest actions by the joint kisan movement on 26-27 November.

The joint platform of trade unions declared its total solidarity with the peasants' struggle including physical participation in their protest actions at all levels. Similarly the joint kisan movement extended support and solidarity to the workers' General Strike.

What is highly significant is that this solidarity was not confined to mere statements. It was visible in actions at the ground level. The calls for solidarity and support by the two joint platforms found consonance among the broad masses of workers and peasants and moved them into action. Thousands of peasants and agricultural workers participated in the protest actions across the country on the day of strike. Thousands of workers are on the roads today in solidarity with the peasants' protests. Massive protest actions were held all over the country on 28th November, at the call of CITU, against the BJP government's attacks to prevent peasants from reaching the national capital.

The peasants are heroically resisting the war like attacks unleashed by the BJP government. The

workers' strike on 26th November, despite the threats of victimisation and vindictive actions including arrests was no less heroic. Thousands of workers across the country have been arrested on the day of the strike. Police in some states like Andhra Pradesh, Haryana etc have resorted to preventive arrests also. The government and several managements of public sector enterprises have issued circulars warning employees about disciplinary action for going on strike, organising mobilisations etc.

Despite this, the 26th November strike, the second general strike within the span of less than a year, saw huge and spontaneous response from all sections of the working class. The anger against the amendment to labour laws, further curtailing their rights and benefits was witnessed among the industrial workers, both in the public and private sectors. Thousands of workers, in different sectors across the country, who were aloof from strike action earlier, joined the strike; many more supported it actively.

### **PARTICIPATION**

As per the reports available so far, the strike in the public sector saw increased participation of permanent employees, while contract workers totally participated in many public sector units. Strike was effective in most of the Bengaluru based public sector units; it was partial in the Hyderabad based PSUs. It evoked good response in the public

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sector units in Visakhapatnam. There was a total strike in CEL in Ghaziabad, with the total participation of contract workers.

**1. PETROLEUM SECTOR** : Strike was effective in the petroleum sector. It was near total in Digboi refinery and successful in Guwahati refinery. All contract workers participated in the strike in Bongaigaon refinery. All LPG bottling plants and product terminals of the entire North east region were totally shut down due to the strike. It was total in ONGC project in Cachar and partial in Tripura. Strike was partial in BPCL and HPCL. The strike was successful in the coal industry affecting production and dispatch. 80% of the total 25 lakh electricity employees and engineers across the country have reported to have participated in the strike.

**2. INDUSTRIAL PLANTS** : Protest actions were held in more than 12500 places in cities, towns, villages, power plants and substations in 615 districts out of the 680 districts in the country. Strike was massive in Salem and Vizag steel plants; it was partial in others; though contract workers participated in a big way. Workers in the captive coal and iron ore mines under SAIL were on near total strike.

**3. PORTS** : Strike was near total in Calcutta, Cochin, Tuticorin, Paradip and Bhavnagar ports and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT). Except in Mumbai, North Mangalore and Goa ports workers in all the other major ports joined the strike.

**4. SERVICE SECTORS** : Strike was near total in the insurance sector including life and general insurance all over the country and in the banking industry except in SBI and private banks. In most of the states, strike received massive response from the central and state government employees. In the others government employees organised demonstrations in support of the strike. BSNL employees across the country joined the strike and also participated in the demonstrations in large numbers.

**4. TRANSPORT** : Over 3.5 crore transport workers have reported to have participated in the strike across the country despite the severe repression by the government and the police in many states forcing them to ply their vehicles. Autorickshaws, taxis, private buses were off the road. In several states, truck operators also stopped plying their vehicles in solidarity. The strike in the road transport sector was total in Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, Odisha, Assam etc.

**5. PRIVATE INDUSTRY** : The participation of workers in the private industrial clusters has been increasing since the general strike of 2015. This trend continued further in this strike. Workers in most of the major industrial clusters across the country – in West Bengal, Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Delhi, Odisha, Jharkhand, Assam, Punjab etc joined the strike, as per the partial information available. In Tamil Nadu, while the industrial clusters in and around Kancheepuram were closed due to the heavy rains, workers in other industrial clusters joined the strike.





**6. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS** : As per report from the Construction Workers Federation of India, around 30 lakh construction workers participated in the strike. Over 700 union activists were arrested in Odisha, West Bengal and other states.

**7. SCHEME WORKERS** : The scheme workers, anganwadi employees, ASHAs, midday meal workers, para teachers, teaching and non teaching staff of National Child Labour Projects, the different categories of scheme workers in the National Health Mission etc joined the strike en masse. Thousands of them participated in the protest demonstrations on the day of the strike.

**8. RAILWAYS** : Railway employees in several places in the country held protest demonstrations in solidarity with the striking working class in the country and against Railway privatisation. In some zones and divisions, the joint platforms of railway employees' organisations formed against railway privatisation, led the protests. In some places the railway employees joined torch light processions in support of the strike on 25th November evening, along with other trade unions. Railway contract workers' unions participated in the rallies and dharnas held on the day of the strike in several places. Rail Neer plant employees joined solidarity actions.

**9. TECHNOLOGY SECTOR** : ITES employees in Kerala and Telangana joined the strike. The IT companies in the SEZ in Kerala were closed, along with the other companies. Active participation of IT employees in the campaign was a significant feature in this strike. IT employees in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal etc took initiative in designing and circulating posters, slogans, and popularising the message of the strike through social media, wall writing etc. IT employees also participated in bike rallies on the eve of the strike.

**10. SEAFARERS** : Indian seafarers on sea in Indian and foreign vessels owned by Shipping Corporation of India, Dredging Corporation of India, Director Shipping Services (DSS – Andaman), Essar Shipping etc sent solidarity messages from around the world, as did seamen working in several foreign vessels.

Lastly, Retired employees and pensioners and their organisations fully supported the strike and many of them actively campaigned for its success.

# Women Workers' Strike

The visibility of the women in the General Strike has been continuously increasing in the recent period. An online meeting of the working committee tier of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) was held on 16 October 2020, preceding the CITU Working Committee meeting (online) held on 18-19 October 2020. The meeting was attended by – women working committee members and state CCWW convenors from AP, Delhi, Haryana, HP, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, UP and West Bengal. Tapan Sen, General Secretary CITU in his address explained the current political situation and the tasks of working women. The draft report, circulated beforehand was placed by the Convenor, A R Sindhu.

The report reviewed the pre- and post- Covid activities including the historic Jail Bhara on the occasion of International Women's Day 2020. The 12th Convention of Working

Women scheduled in April 2020 had to be postponed due to the pandemic and lock down. The meeting noted that the momentum created by the 6th March Jail bhara could not be maintained due to the pandemic and lock down. Although during the lock down period, the participation of women workers in the relief operations and struggles both independent as well as joint, was commendable, there was nominal activities of the AICCWW or CCWWs on specific issues of working women.

On the issue of domestic workers central calls were given. At the initiative of AICCWW(CITU) a call was given highlighting the demands of frontline workers, especially the scheme workers 'phool nahi suraksha do' (Not the flowers but we want safety) on 14 May 2020. A joint All India Strike of Scheme workers was held on 7-8 August 2020. The meeting decided to take up the following tasks:

## Future Tasks

- *All India General Strike on 26 November 2020- Wide campaign focusing on the issues of working women and the impact of the policies/ law changes on working women. Link up the issue of atrocities against women, dalits etc with the policies during the campaign*
- *Meeting of the CCWWs and sub committees to be completed by 30 October 2020.*
- *Maximum publicity and reach to the online meeting on 7th November/ Conclusion of Golden Jubilee celebrations of CITU and Centenary of Formation of First National Trade Union Centre*
- *Survey/study to be conducted on the issues of women workers and impact of pandemic to formulate specific demands at the state level.*
- *Next AICCWW meeting after the General Strike, in the first week of December, to discuss the 12th Convention.*

# **Peasants Historic Delhi Chalo Struggle**

**P. Krishnaprasad**

The country is witnessing a massive determined struggle of the peasantry that shook the ruling classes. Delhi Chalo struggle of the peasantry is one of the biggest strikes by the people of India against the neo-liberal forces during last 30 years and represents awakening of the peasantry in seven decades of post-independence era.

The enactment of the three Farm Acts and the introduction of the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 have made the peasantry angry across the country who are pauperised by exploitation of neo-liberal market forces.

## **Background of the Present Movement**

The struggle demanding Minimum Support Price (MSP) with guaranteed procurement for all crops and comprehensive loan waiver have been going on across the country at different levels independently and jointly by various peasant and agriculture worker organizations and platforms. The formation of joint platforms of Bhumi Adhikar Andolan,

All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) and many other regional as well as all India platforms in the recent period represent this fury and the discontent among the peasantry. The Delhi Chalo struggle was called by the AIKSCC. This call was essential in the background of the movement unleashed by the coordination committee of 30 organisations in Punjab of which 10 organisations are part of AIKSCC. Their major apprehensions regarding three Farm Acts are land pooling under contract farming by the giant corporates and its ramification on the small and middle peasants and agriculture workers

and land alienation and loss of livelihood; the promotion of corporate market system that would disrupt the present, though limited, procurement system involving MSP and FCI network; corporate control over agricultural production and the paradigm shift proposed would destroy the food security; opening up of the domestic food market to multinationals; and the federal character of the country being compromised.

## **Series of Movements Organised**

The AIKSCC consistently intervened and organized series of action programmes across the country. It gave call to burn on 10 June the copies of ordinances related to the three Farm Acts promulgated on 3 June. In June and July, series of campaigns were organised. Most important development was on 9 August Jail Bharo call joining hands with the Central Trade Unions (CTUs) at the joint initiative of CITU and AIKS and AIAWU. Around 12 lakh people across the country were mobilised on 9 August Jail Bharo programme.

## **Movement in Punjab**

The various Kisan organizations in Punjab, working together in this struggle and campaigns, have been successful in giving an anti-corporate direction to these struggles and slowly convert it as people's movement. The major steps in this movement were opening of Toll Plazas; shutting down Reliance petrol pumps and Adani group malls; and sit-in struggle on the rail tracks totally blocking rail tracks leading to cancellation of all rail movement including the goods and service trains. This movement had general support of



the trade union movement. Thus, Punjab became the epicentre of the current struggle against the neo-liberal forces under the patronage of the BJP-RSS led Union government.

### **Joint Peasants – AgriWorkers’ & Workers’ Initiatives**

AIKS along with CITU and AIAWU had conducted series of campaigns since April 2020. The issue of legislating four Labour Codes and three Farm Acts and the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 were campaigned across the country. When Modi government enacted three Farm Acts on 20 September 2020 by tampering with the parliamentary traditions, even denying the right of the Parliamentarians to cast their votes and not allowing any Parliamentary committee to look into the various clauses of the Bills; the AIKSCC and the CTUs gave joint call to observe All India Protest Day on 25 September 2020. After assessing the growing discontent among the peasants and workers, in consultation with the Punjab Kisan organizations, AIKSCC gave call of Delhi Chalo on 26, 27 November 2020.

Simultaneously, movement also developed by the CTUs which gave call of countrywide Workers General Strike on 26 November 2020 on demands which included the demand of repealing the three Farm Acts and the Electricity Bill. The AIKS and AIAWU union had given call of Grameen Harthal and Chakka Jaam on 26 November in solidarity with the struggle of the working class.



Artwork by Takalluf

## **Farmers Delhi Chalo Movement**

This is the context of the Delhi Chalo programme of the Kisan movement. The backbone of the massive upsurge of the peasantry is the mobilization from Punjab. They had prepared to go to Delhi mainly in tractor trolleys with ration, kitchen utensils and stoves, woolen clothes with determination to camp in Delhi indefinitely.

Though the Modi government and its Home ministry under Amit Shah did everything possible, through the BJP-led Khattar government in Haryana, to stop the cavalcades of Punjab farmers at the Punjab–Haryana boarder itself; the determined peasant warriors foiled all such attempts and advanced towards Delhi.

The Kisan masses reached Singhu border in the Chandigarh–Delhi national highway with around 1200 tractors, trolleys and other vehicles including trucks.



**Artwork by Kamran Akhter a.k.a Chhabikar**

At Tikri border in the Rohtak-Delhi national highway on 27 November around 4,800 vehicles reached. Around 2.5 lakh farmers have reached Delhi mainly from Punjab and Haryana. The Haryana Kisan organizations have mobilized the peasantry well in support and joined in the struggle like Punjab Kisans, coming with tractor trolleys and small vehicles. The people of Haryana have extended full support to the farmers who reached Delhi border.

The peasants coming from MP, UP and Uttarkhand also reached Delhi through various national highways. The police blocked the peasant masses that caused traffic blockade. Covid-19 related restrictions in rail traffic limited mobilization from across the country. AIKSCC has decided to go ahead with the Delhi Chalo struggle and mobilized the peasantry across the country at local and regional level.

The struggle forced the Government to invite the Joint Kisan Morcha leadership and held several rounds of discussion with them. The adamant stand of the Union government not to repeal the three Farm Acts and the Electricity Bill has caused stalemate.

However, the growing participation of the struggle has forced the Government to accept many criticisms of anti-farmer contents in the Farm Acts and the Electricity Bill which were raised by the Kisan leadership and had offered to make some amendments in these Acts. However, the Kisan movement is determined to not to step back till the Government agrees to repeal the Farm Acts and withdraw the Electricity Bill.

The future of the struggle depends on the expansion and intensification of the peasant struggle across the country and the support from all other sections including the workers, the trades, petty producers, students, youth and women. The Kisan Movement is confident to intensify the fight till achieving the just demands.

*(P. Krishnaprasad is Finance Secretary of AIKS)*





## ***7 November 2020, CITU Celebrates***

- **104th Year of the Working-Class-led October Revolution**
- **Centenary of the First National Trade Union Centre in India**
- **Golden Jubilee of the Foundation of CITU**

**An online public meeting was held on 7 November 2020, to celebrate in India the three historical events of the International and National Working Class movement – the 104th year of working class led October Revolution; the Centenary Celebration of first National Trade Union Centre in India and – the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Foundation of CITU.**

The online public meeting was attended and heard by over 44,000 workers, CITU functionaries and others. The meeting was presided over by CITU national President K. Hemalata and was addressed by 7 national leaders of CITU in seven languages - Hemalata in English; General Secretary Tapan Sen in Hindi; national Secretary and Kerala State General Secretary Elamaram Kareem in Malayalam; national Vice President and West Bengal State President Subhas Mukherjee in Bengalee; national Vice President and Tamilnadu President A. Soundarajan in Tamil; national Vice President and Telangana State General Secretary M. Saibabu in Telegu and national Secretary and Karnataka State General Secretary Meenakshi Sundaram in Kannada.

# THE SPEECH

Dear Comrades, Revolutionary greetings to all of you on the occasion of the 103rd anniversary of the Great October Revolution;

Today, in this unique online public meeting, in which lakhs of you from all over the country are with us, we commemorate three very important milestones in the history of the working class; the world working class as well as the working class of our country. And keeping internationalism and class struggle, two important pillars of the revolutionary working class movement, we prepare ourselves for the challenges ahead.

**F**irst we commemorate today the Great October Revolution that shook the world and changed its course; the Revolution that brought into power the working class, the hitherto exploited class.

Soviet Union showed to the entire world, the great advances that humanity can achieve under the leadership of the working class – in terms eradicating unemployment, illiteracy, ill health, gender and other social inequalities. The Socialist Soviet Union also led the battle against fascism undergoing immense sacrifice, to ultimately force its decisive defeat. Industrially backward and poor at the time of the Revolution, Soviet Union went ahead to compete with the USA, the most advanced and the richest capitalist country, in the fields of science and technology, sports, education, economic development etc. It inspired the working class and common people in the entire world to fight against colonial oppression, for national independence, for rights at work place and society. It forced to fore the concept of welfare state which immensely contributed toward expanding the rights of the toiling people even in many capitalist countries. The ILO was established and the capitalist countries were compelled to concede improved wages and working conditions, right to collective bargaining, and certain social security benefits to their workers.

The Great October Revolution was followed by socialist revolutions in many countries - China, Vietnam, Cuba, several East European countries, North Korea etc. However, socialism, suffered setback with the fall of Soviet Russia and East European countries. Shortcomings and weaknesses in implementing socialist path of development, hitherto uncharted path in the history of humanity, led to the setback.

However, this in no manner negates the greatness of the October Revolution and its achievement. Nor does it in anyway indicate the failure of socialism as a system. Even today, the Covid 19 pandemic has once again established the supremacy of the socialist system in saving lives and protecting the health of the people and also in addressing the crisis of the economy in a pro-people way. While the USA, the most advanced and richest capitalist country, leads the world in the total number of affected people and the number of deaths due to Covid 19, the socialist countries, including China, which was the first country to be affected by the new Corona virus, were highly successful in containing the disease. This is because, in a socialist system, it is the people's welfare, not private profits that determine policies. And in the matter of addressing the impact of the crisis in the global economy, while the major capitalist economies including many in the developing countries are witnessing a stagnant rather negative GDP rates, the socialist countries could maintain their respective economy growing while consistently improving the living conditions of the people.

Today, in the midst of the crisis that predates Covid 19, the capitalist system can think of no other way to sustain itself, than to further increase exploitation of workers and denude them of their basic labour and workplace rights, grab public resources. It is totally discredited and bankrupt. People, particularly the young across the world are in search for alternatives. Thus, on this day, the struggle for an alternative system, for the socialist system assumes even more importance than ever before. On this occasion, when we commemorate the Great October Revolution, let us pledge to carry forward the struggle for an exploitation-free socialist system.



**S**econd, today we also commemorate the centenary of the first national trade union centre; the centenary that concluded on 31st October. It is not a coincidence that the first national trade union centre in our country was established soon after the Great October Revolution; to coordinate the struggles developing in various parts of the country during the span of century, proceeding to it, and to develop country-wide working class movement.

The leaders of the working class of our country, as working class leaders across the world, were inspired by the Great October Revolution and the leading role of the working class in achieving the same. The working class of our country was already showing political maturity and the understanding that their struggles on their immediate demands, against exploitation and for improvement in their conditions were intrinsically linked to the struggle for independence of the country from British colonialism. It is with this clear understanding that the working class of Bombay went on six days' strike against Tilak's indictment - one day strike for every year of sentence. They clashed with the British army. 16 workers died and 50 others were seriously injured in the repression by the army. Similar struggles by the working class also ushered in many other parts of the country.

It is in the process of such struggles and sacrifices, struggles on the immediate local demands as well as against British imperialism that the first national trade union centre in our country was born on 31st October 1920. Soon, the red flag was hoisted on 1st May 1923 by Singaravelu in Madras for the first time in our country.

Waves of militant struggles erupted after the formation of the first all India trade union centre, the AITUC. Textile workers, railway workers, jute workers, shipping workers, coal workers, communications workers, engineering workers etc were all on strikes across the country. The British government was determined to suppress these struggles. It introduced the repressive bills like the 'Trade Disputes Bill' and the 'Public Safety Bill'. It was when the 'Trade Disputes Bill' was being discussed in the Central Assembly on 8th April 1929 that Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutta threw bombs in the Assembly hall with the thundering slogans 'Inquilab Zindabad', 'Down with Imperialism' and 'Workers of the World Unite'. This was meant to force the British government, deaf to the demands of the workers and the common people, to pay attention.

**I**nquilab Zindabad has today become the war cry of the working class of our country. Also the glorious Naval Mutiny of 1946 and the active role of the working class of Bombay through massive strike action braving atrocities and martyrdom will be remembered by all.

After Independence, the working class had to confront the Indian ruling classes, who have decided to take the country in the capitalist path of development. They have ignored the aspirations of the workers and of the people, who wanted Independent India to march forward towards a society free of economic exploitation and social oppression. As we all know, capitalist system, driven by the profit motive, not people's welfare, is inherently crisis ridden. Whenever there is crisis, the ruling classes representing capitalist interests try to pass on the burden to the shoulders of the working people, in order to protect their own profits. That is what we saw since independence; that is what we see today.

Post independence period also witnessed many militant struggles against exploitations and for asserting the rights of class and such struggles engulfed not merely the industrial sector but also the major section of middle class employees, particularly in the govt establishments and financial sectors.

The economic crisis of the 1960s saw attacks being mounted on the lives and livelihood of workers and the common people. There were increasing closures, job losses, and unemployment, increasing contractorisation, attacks on workers' right to collective bargaining, on their bonus and social security benefits. The situation called for initiatives by the red flag union, the AITUC, to unite the working class, to bring together all trade unions into joint struggles against the attacks by the employers and the government policies patronising such attacks.

But, the then reformist leadership of AITUC, instead of working towards uniting the working class and sharpening class struggle, adopted a class collaborative path. The very idea of class struggle was sought to be ridiculed.

**I**t was in this situation that CITU was founded, the THIRD event that we commemorate today. CITU was founded over fifty years ago on 30th May 1970 when all efforts to correct the class collaborationist path from within the organisation failed, when efforts to bring the mainstream trade union into the path of unity and united struggles could not succeed; when it became a historic necessity to unite the entire working class and take it into the track of class struggle to confront the mounting attacks of the ruling classes. B. T. Ranadive, P. Ramamurti, Jyoti Basu, M. K. Pandhe and others, who were the leading figures of AITUC, led the struggle against reformism and class collaboration and were the founding leaders of CITU. B. T. Ranadive, the founder president of CITU, emphasised the importance of combining working class unity, working class struggle and the fight against reformist tendencies in daily struggle. He taught us that the fight against reformist practice and the struggle for united action for the working class cannot be separated.

Immediately after its formation CITU took up the task of uniting the working class movement and developing joint struggles in right earnest. The ruling classes were clearly aware of the danger of such unity and united struggles and did everything to isolate CITU. But they were not successful. The glorious railway workers' strike in 1974 galvanised the entire working class movement. The strike that continued for 20 days braving victimisation of the railway workers and inhuman repression let loose upon them and their families continues to be a source of inspiration to the working class movement even to this day. CITU played a very important role and was an active constituent of the NCCRS (National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle). It organised solidarity actions, legal aid and all other forms of relief and support for the victimised workers.

The first ever country wide general strike by all the central trade unions, except INTUC, was held on 19th January 1982. Through this strike the working class raised the demands of the farmers and agricultural workers also, drawing these sections in active participation in the strike in many parts of the country. Ten people including farmers and agricultural workers died in police firing in different parts of the country on that day.



The unity of the working class; unity of the working class with other sections of toiling people, peasants agricultural workers etc; united struggles of the working class, both sectoral as well as national; solidarity actions of the working class in support of the various sections of toiling people like the peasants etc – all these have seen huge increase during the last five decades.

CITU's initiatives and role in the formation as well as interventions of such joint trade union platforms is well acknowledged today. We have also taken initiatives to develop joint actions with and solidarity actions in support of peasants' demands. This emanates from our class oriented perspective and our constitutional objective of ending all exploitation in society and our understanding of class struggle in accomplishing this. We are proud of our role. But much more, much much more, needs to be done.

We are also proud of our role in developing united struggles against the neoliberal policies, initiated in our country in 1991, to address the economic crisis into which the country was plunged at that time. This was nothing but an attempt to restructure the entire economy at the dictates of the international finance capital with a more pro-imperialist bias, away from self-reliant economic development. This had also been an attempt by the ruling classes to come out of the crisis by attacking the workers, their right to organisation and collective bargaining, to weaken the trade union movement by totally changing the employer employee relations and the work places. These attempts are continuing today. The BJP government led by Modi is patting on its back to have accomplished these so called 'labour law reforms' with the passing of labour codes in Parliament.

The working class went on 19 country wide general strikes against these neoliberal policies since 1991. In addition there were innumerable joint sectoral struggles including strikes by almost all sections of workers and employees. CITU's role in initiating the process of taking decisions related to joint struggles and in making them a success through its relentless campaigns and mobilisations needs no reiteration. It is well known.

**T**oday, the BJP government, led by Modi, is most shamelessly utilising the Covid 19 pandemic and the related lockdown to hurriedly push through its neoliberal agenda. While crores of workers and other toiling people have lost their jobs, incomes and livelihoods, the BJP government is helping, not the workers and the needy, but the big corporates and business houses.

It is helping the Ambanis, Adanis of our country as well as Amazon, Wal-Mart, Facebook and other foreign companies to amass wealth by grabbing our land, natural resources and public sector, by converting our workers into slaves, and throwing our farmers to their mercy. It is converting the country into a junior strategic partner of US imperialism, mortgaging our sovereignty, self reliance and the interests of our small peasants, workers and common people. This is totally against the vision of our forefathers, who sacrificed their entire lives for an independent self-reliant country that can fulfill the aspirations of its toiling people; not of a few rich amassing wealth robbing the people and the nation.

In the midst of an aggravating crisis in the economy, rather the capitalist order itself the Modi Govt seeks to completely 'authoritarian-ise' with a clear fascistic intent, the entire governance of the economy, of the democratic political system and the society as a whole after their comprehensive programme of establishing the Hindu Rashtra. Not merely the lives, livelihood entitlements and rights of the people are under such barbaric attack, the democratic system and institutions are being targeted for dilution and elimination, so also the societal harmony and unity of the people are being under the atrocious onslaught by the divisive machination of various hues, with the active patronage and sponsorship by BJP Govts, through poisonous and criminal depredations by RSS led bandwagons.

We are now confronting a serious challenge - to defend our rights, the democratic system, self-reliance of our economy and our national interests in its entirety.

**I**t is in this situation that the joint trade union platform called for a country-wide general strike on 26th November 2020, against the anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national policies of this BJP government. Yes, we have led many strikes with increasing participation and coverage. But, this ensuing strike is not like any earlier ones. The ruling classes are going ahead with the determination to push workers into nineteenth century slavery. They feel the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown is the right situation for them to do that. Now or Never! That is their slogan.

It is time for the working class to shout back – Never Ever. We will not allow this to pass. And that is possible. The working class was not born with a silver spoon in its mouth. It was not born with rights handed over to it over a golden platter. Each and every right, each and every little benefit was fought and won. The working class, which has fought and won, knows how to protect and safeguard. That is the history of humanity. This 26th November general strike will be a precursor to many strikes, many battles, until the working class snatches the final victory.

It is with this understanding that the preparations for the 26th November general strike should start. NOW!

**T**hat is Comrades, the responsibility bestowed upon us by history – to unite the working class, to take united struggles to the level of defiance and resistance, to defeat the class enemy, to win the war and change the society. CITU has taken up that challenge with renewed vigour fifty years back, while carrying forward the legacy and traditions of more than century old struggles of the Indian working class—fight, unite and advance towards greater unity for bigger fights. CITU will march ahead to victory.

We Will Overcome!





## ***Adityanath's New Hitler-Like Rule on Inter-Faith Marriages***

***Brinda Karat***

In 1934, Nazi Germany enacted a set of laws that prohibited marriage or sexual relations between "Aryans and Jews." Jews were quite wrongly considered a "race" in Nazi doctrine instead of a religious group, but in effect, the ban was based on religious affinity defined by whether or not the individual concerned belonged to a "Jewish congregation." The punishment for such marriages was imprisonment and later, concentration camps.

Such examples from history come to mind in the light of the outrageous and draconian ordinance adopted by the UP cabinet. This is the first of the anti-"Love Jihad" laws which several BJP state governments have declared they will enact. Although the words "love jihad" are not specifically mentioned, the difference between the UP ordinance and the existing stringent and undemocratic anti-conversion laws already existing in at least eight states is that it includes specifically "conversion for marriage." The UP Chief Minister has threatened violence against Muslim men married to Hindu women who had converted. He recently said, "I warn those who conceal their identity and play with our sisters' respect - if you don't mend your ways, your 'Ram naam satya' (chant at Hindu funerals) journey will begin." With this new ordinance, which is part of the poisonous "love jihad" campaign, what has begun is the Ram Naam Satya of the Indian constitution.

It is called the "UP Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion 2020" and the purpose is to target inter-faith marriages through ill-defined and extremely general clauses. The marriage will be declared "null and void" if the marriage is solemnised for the primary purpose of converting a woman from one religion to another". Any "blood relation" of the couple can make a complaint to the police. The norm that a person is innocent unless proven guilty is overturned by shifting the onus on the person



***“This is nothing but legal sanction to the criminalization of love. It is a direct assault on Article 21 of the Constitution which guarantees personal liberty and the right to life.”***

converting, or those who facilitated it, to prove that the conversion was not done through misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement, fraudulent means or for marriage. Moreover, a person seeking to convert to another religion for marriage would have to inform the District Magistrate two months prior to through a prescribed form. The punishment ranges from one to three years and to ten years if an SC or ST person is “converted.”

This is nothing but legal sanction to the criminalization of love. It is a direct assault on Article 21 of the Constitution which guarantees personal liberty and the right to life. An adult Hindu woman wanting to get married to a Muslim because she loves him may also decide to convert from her religion out of choice. The constitution gives her that right under Article 25 - freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion. What further evidence, other than her statement given of her own free will, can she produce to prove that it is love that determined her actions? Why should she have to give notice of two months to access her constitutional right?

The ordinance is weighted against that love; its message is give up the love or face jail (if not you, certainly your husband). In its devastating impact on couples in inter-faith marriages, it is no different than Hitler’s law. The charges made by the “love jihad” campaign are that Hindu girls are ‘cheated or coerced into marriage’, that it is a conspiracy by Muslim organisations financed by foreign funds, that it is not love but conversion to Islam which is the main goal of Muslim men luring Hindu girls and so on. These have proven to be fraudulent and false, time and again. In Kanpur, UP, on the day before the ordinance was adopted, the report of a Special Investigation Team or SIT set up to

probe 14 inter-religious marriages between Muslim girls and Hindu boys over the last two years was made public by the police. Even this SIT set up by Yogi Adityanath’s government could not find any evidence of conspiracy or foreign funds linked to the inter-faith marriages. But that did not stop the UP Police from arresting the men in 11 of the cases on other charges such as kidnapping and the girl being a minor. These are common charges made by the woman’s guardians to put the men in jail.

On the other hand, Hindutva organisations have openly given a call of “Beti bachao, bahu lao.” According to Opindia, a right-wing publication, an organisation in Bengal called Hindu Samhati had a special project to marry Muslim women to Hindu men and convert them. In a column paying homage to its founder Tapan Ghosh, a former RSS member described as a Hindutva icon, it said the Samhati had organised as many as 300 marriages between Muslim women and Hindu youths. “The Hindutva icon used to say that these women used to consider him as their father since most were disowned by their family.” This of course would not be considered a conspiracy, but ghar wapasi!

In India, inter-faith marriages have a specific context. Personal laws of different religions have one thing in common: whether under the Hindu Marriage Act, under Muslim or Christian law, couples getting married under personal law must belong to the same religion or convert, otherwise they cannot get married. Even in Arya Samaj marriages, the condition is that they have to be Hindu or belonging to what is legally defined as an “allied” religion - Sikh, Jain, Buddhist. If one of them is Muslim or Christian, they have to convert to being an Arya Samajist. But the question remains: why do more men not convert?

# Anganwadi workers' movement against opening of play schools in Haryana



Against the opening of play schools in Haryana, Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union, Haryana lit copies of the letter issued by the department at the district level across the state on September 24. In Kaithal district Workers and helpers lit copies of the order in front of the residence of WCD Minister Haryana. On 26 September, the WCD Minister promised to hold talks with the delegation of the union. But when the delegation arrived there, the minister behaved very rudely, forcing the members to boycott the meeting.

The union delegation held a press conference at the residence of the WCD Minister, forcing them to respond politely. The delegation handed over a 13-point demand letter and were assured by the WCD Minister that meetings will be held between the director and the union. But nothing happened.

After the 26 November strike, on 28 November, all the anganwadi workers of Kaithal district demonstrated at the residence of the WCD Minister, and were yet again met with no response. Usha Rani, President, AIFAWH and Amrit Kaur leader of Anganwadi Mulazim Union, Punjab were also present along with Shakuntala, State General Secretary of the union. At the demonstration, union leaders met and decided that they will not back down. A Tehsildar received the demand letter from the union and assured to fix the appointment with the WCD Minister.

the State Secretary General of Anganwadi Union, Shakuntala and chase away all the workers and helpers. Considering the order, the police proceeded to arrest Shakuntala, all the workers and the helpers resisted it vigorously by building a human chain around her. Around 12 Anganwadi workers were injured in lathi charge.

But the biggest achievement was that the police could not chase workers and helpers nor were they successful in arresting Shakuntala. The union was also successful in getting an appointment with the ICDS Director.

Protests were also held on 2nd December in Karnal, Kaithal, Jind, Yamunanagar districts in Haryana against the lathi charge and the attempts to arrest State General Secretary Shakuntala. The union delegation including AIFAWH President Usha Rani, and state leaders of anganwadi union met with ICDS Director in Panchkula Haryana at the scheduled time on December 4th. The director assured that the pre-school will be imparted only through the anganwadis.

Due to the pressure built by the movement, on November 30, the pending 6-month center rent was given in some districts, ration was supplied in some places and honorarium was paid as well.

## Anganwadi workers' in Assam against NEP



District-based protests were held across Assam on 21 November 2020 on the call of "Assam State Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union" against implementation of New Education policy in the state which will dismantle ICDS. From 19 districts around thirty thousand anganwadi workers and helpers participated in these protests.

The NEP suggested by the state does not mention the ECCE given through anganwadi centres, which may cause a situation where thousands of anganwadi workers and helpers will be unemployed.

The union demanded the withdrawal of the NEP which promotes centralization, commercialization and communalization of education. Demands for minimum wages not less than 18000/- ex gratia on retirement of anganwadi employees were also raised by the union.



## Telangana Midday Meal Workers' Protest

On 27th October 2020, Telangana Mid Day Meal Workers Union held a district level dharna in front of the school education office. State Secretary of the union, Daya Ramadevi addressed the gathering in Ibrahimpatnam and said that 88 thousand mid day meal workers across the state are suffering from not getting monthly remuneration since last April.

The State government did not release a budget for payment of MDM workers. Their demands included - an immediate payment of salary (incl. 12 months salary and pending bills), provision of cooking gas subsidy, health insurance facility and special allocation for working during corona period.

NCH Supraja, District General secretary of the union, Sivakumari, Guntur District Secretary and other leaders addressed the gathering.



# **A Tale of Two Arrests: Anchor Arnab Goswami & Activist Stan Swamy**

*Revati Siva Kumar (Article from TheLeaflet.in)*

Star anchor Arnab Goswami's arrest on November 4, 2020, from his home in Mumbai and his bail process, has sparked off a political war and protests in many places. But the nation sadly does not seem to want to know why 84-year-old Stan Swamy is still in prison post-November 5, 2020, the date till when his judicial custody was extended.

While Goswami is whipping up a sympathy wave for his "persecution", octogenarian activist Swamy's simple request for a straw and sipper in prison to drink water as he had Parkinson's disease was deferred by the National Investigative Agency for 20 days. Other details of his arrest on October 8 from his Ranchi residence are distressing. Why was it done at night? What was there to fear from a gentle Jesuit priest? Why was Swamy in judicial custody until October 24 and why was his remand extended for two more weeks? What could be the reason for taking him as the 16th detainee under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in "terrorism"-related charges?

Arnab Goswami was arrested for his alleged role in the death of Anvay Naik, who committed suicide in 2018, and held under Section 306 and 34 of the Indian Penal Code. Yet his imprisonment stirred a lot of protests about "press freedom" and "political vendetta". However, the reasons for arresting Swamy, a veteran tribal rights activist, under UAPA was neither clear nor was there any concrete evidence against him, even though the charge-sheet against him runs into 10,000 pages.

## **FACT AND FICTION**

What are the purported reasons, anyway, for Stan Swamy's detention? Firstly, it was seemingly to prevent him from perpetuating unlawful activities, due to an alleged past

record of having "incited a mob to violence" at Bhima-Koregaon in Maharashtra on January 1, 2018.

Fact: The Jesuit priest never visited Bhima-Koregaon or the festival, 1,800 km away from Ranchi. How could he have engineered a riot, even if he did, from a place so remote in another state?

Second accusation: He had Maoist links.

Fact: Stan Swamy had no links with Maoism except to challenge the arrest of a number of Adivasis and Moolavasis accused of Maoism. The charge-sheet claims that a lot of "incriminating" documents of his links were found through digital evidence in the form of "emails, call records, writings, speeches and past conduct", allegedly related to a "conspiracy". Swamy denied them all and called the evidence fabricated.

Thirdly, he was said to have converted a number of Adivasis.

Fact: Being an activist, Swamy was more interested in supporting Adivasis to fight for their land rights, not in getting them converted. Moreover, if he was really a Maoist, he would be an atheist, so "conversion" would be a paradox.

The evidence against him appears flimsy, but he has not been given the right to challenge it in court till his next hearing on November 26. The People's Union for Civil Liberties recorded that in October 2018, the police had clearly told the Bombay High Court that Fr. Stan was "only a suspect and not an accused". Yet, he was questioned in Bagaicha for 15 hours over five days and still the NIA remained silent. On April 14, the NIA swooped down on him and other activists "under a completely fabricated and non-existent conspiracy".

### **UAPA, A CONVENIENT TOOL**

Purportedly, the UAPA, a “counter-terrorism law”, seems to be a convenient weapon for governments to arrest human rights defenders, journalists and protesters. Though it first became a policy in 1967, it has today enlarged its ambit to detain individuals who can be held for almost 180 days. The UAPA exceeds even international law as well as standards, slowing down investigations and bail provisions, ensuring that detainees are held much longer during pre-trial. About 3,005 cases were registered under UAPA from 2016 to 2018 and 3,974 people were arrested. The distressing aspects of UAPA were called out in May 2020 by the UN Special Procedures mandate holders (independent human rights experts), who released a public communication outlining their concerns and calling upon the authorities to amend the Act in sync with international human rights obligations. It equates non-violent opposition or criticism of policies and institutions as anti-national or “terrorist”. While there is support for the UAPA detainees from progressive, liberal individuals and institutions, the opposition is not visible or glamorous to the public, who prefer to shed tears over the arrest of Arnab Goswami.

However, the real reason for slapping Stan Swamy with Elgar Parishad charges was probably to deflect attention from the anti-establishment issues that he was grappling with. He had been working with Adivasi communities on issues related to land, forest and labour rights in Jharkhand for over three decades and questioned the non-implementation of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, which mandated the setting up of a Tribes Advisory Council.

He had opposed many govt. laws and policies, even filing a PIL for the release of undertrial prisoners and pursuing the conduct of a speedy trial and appointment of a judicial commission to probe delaying of the trial process. He also opposed setting up “land banks” to free up community land for small and big industries. “This, I believe, is the main reason why the state is keen to put me out of the way,” Swamy said in a video released before his arrest.

### **WHAT DOES STAN SWAMY REPRESENT?**

Hence, Swamy’s arrest is not just about arresting one person. It is about what he represents – a threat to the government and its ideology. He summed it up best: “...what is happening to me is not something unique happening to me alone, it is a broader process taking place all over the country”. He added that in a way, he was “happy” to be part of the process, so that he was not a silent spectator but became part of the game. “I am ready to pay the price whatever be it,” were his brave words.

Swami is thus a symbol of activism, the voice of tribals, and their struggles to address their broken hopes and aspirations related to displacements and land alienation beyond caste and religion. To silence people like him, the UAPA was used as a form of feudalisation of democracy. It was meant to translate negative energies into positive ones, not do the opposite. It has been used indiscriminately against others too such as Gautam Navlakha, Delhi University associate professor; Hany Babu, Goa Institute of Management professor and Anand Teltumbde, Jyoti Jagtap, Sagar Gorkhe and Ramesh Gaichor, activists of the Bhima Koregaon Shaurya Din Prerna Abhiyaan group. And among those who were not mentioned in the charge-sheet include human rights activist Sudha Bharadwaj, who was jailed in August 2018 by the Pune police, along with Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira.

Hence, while Arnab Goswami’s arrest is regarded as an infringement of his rights and privileges, the arrest of octogenarians and other innocent prisoners goes beyond just the misuse of law. It is the UAPA itself that is brutal. The process itself, then, is the punishment, even if there is no evidence. The laws and policies that have been passed without consultation through Parliament need a huge, collective protest and outrage. Is that possible, when the opposite is happening in a highly polarised country, with the central government, politicians and protests shouting for his release?



## ***Scholarship for Minority Students Never Reach Them***

The Pre-Matric scholarship meant for minority students was found illegally diverted by middlemen in Jharkhand, Bihar and some other states.

Under the scheme, launched by the UPA Government in 2008, students from Class 1 to 5 receive Rs 1,000 per year, and students of Class 6 to 10 receive Rs 5,700 a year if they are day scholars or Rs 10,700 if they are in a hostel. The scholarships are meant for minority students from families with an annual income of less than Rs 1 lakh and who scored at least 50 per cent in their class exams. This scholarship program is meant to help Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Parsi, Jain, and Buddhist students belonging to a family having an annual income of less than Rs. 1 lakh.

Scoring at least 50% in their class exams makes these students eligible for the scheme. Applications need to be verified first by designated nodal heads in schools who are registered with district welfare officers. They are checked by the district and state nodal officers before being sent to the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs, which verifies and uploads them on the NSP ( National Scholarship Portal) before disbursal through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

It was found that in 15 schools in six districts in Jharkhand, middlemen with the help of banking correspondents, and in several cases school staff, stole IDs and passwords to access the NSP and dupe gullible students, and create fake beneficiaries, to pocket a chunk of the scholarship money, Rs 61 crore in 2019-20, the Center had allotted.



***“This scam is yet another illustration of the vulnerabilities of the Aadhaar-enabled payment system. Poor people are regularly robbed of their wages, pensions, and scholarships by corrupt business correspondents who take their fingerprints and private data on one pretext or another.”***

To apply for the scholarship, registration at National Scholarship Portal (NSP) is mandatory. Students also need to submit their educational documents, bank account details, as well as Aadhaar numbers. The money is disbursed annually.

In most cases, schools, and in some cases, middlemen, fill the forms for students. In Jharkhand, records show that Manu Indian Public School in Gaya's Banke Bazar Block has as many as 134 beneficiaries, including 128 who stay in a hostel thereby being eligible for the highest scholarship slab of Rs 10,700 per year. But in reality, the school is a partially painted two-storey structure in a deserted field. The beneficiaries were “fake”, and the school did not have a hostel. There are 150 students in the school but only seven are from minority communities. In Saharsa district, scholarship records show a beneficiary from St Matthews SSS in Purhiran. But there is a catch — Purhiran is in Punjab's Hoshiarpur. The beneficiary is identified as Atul Singha, who has been shown as a Muslim and the son of “Rahman”.

Middlemen and bank officials opened accounts in students' names to divert the funds. This scam is yet another illustration of the vulnerabilities of the Aadhaar-enabled payment system. Poor people are regularly robbed of their wages, pensions, and scholarships by corrupt business correspondents who take their fingerprints and private data on one pretext or another.

In some cases, students and gullible parents were given a small portion of the scholarship money; in others, they were unaware that bank accounts had been set up in their names to avail the scholarship and money disbursed was being withdrawn. The investigation also led to schools in neighbouring Bihar, one in Punjab and another in Assam.



## ***Simultaneous Workers' General Strikes in the World***

Workers of five countries in the world - India, Greece, Italy, South Korea and France – have resorted to countrywide general strikes within a fortnight during this November–December.

On 26 November, 2020 the workers of India and Greece resorted to the general strikes on almost similar demands. CITU in India and PAME in Greece, both WFTU affiliates, had exchanged mutual greetings and solidarity for the workers strike actions in both countries.

A day before, on 25 November, the workers were on general strikes in Italy against anti-workers and pro-corporate legislations and measures by the government; and in South Korea against the government's move to impose restriction on workers strikes and movement.

The workers of France were on strike on 5 December against Macron government's decision on pension cuts.

Covid-19 has direct bearings in all these strikes as the governments of the respective countries are ignoring the workers and people's health concerns in absence health infrastructures and safety measures; and taking advantage of Covid-19, are attempting to impose anti-workers laws and measures; and putting restrictions on strikes and agitations.

### ***Workers General Strike in Greece***

On 26 November 2020, workers of Greece were on countrywide general strike at the call of the All Workers Militant Front (PAME), Civil Servants Confederation, Federations of Associations of Hospital Doctors, the Communist Youth of Greece (KNE) and the base unions in hundreds of workplaces across the country. The strike was mainly in protest against the right-wing government's move to abolish the 8-hours-a-day work system and to put new restrictions on right to strike. The strike was for protection of their lives, health, rights.

The strike demands also included benefits to all unemployed, without conditions; no redundancies and no cuts in employment rights. The strike raised several Covid-19 related demands including the key demand to ensure sufficient infrastructure and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); government's intervention in various sectors including hospitals, workplaces, schools, and public transport facilities to fight against the COVID-19 spread; more hospital beds, including in the ICUs, additional diagnostics and laboratory centers, as well as the mass recruitment of doctors of all specialties and nursing staff; free electricity, gas, water, communication services, etc. for the workers in quarantine.

In schools, the unions are demanding added cleaning staff, the division of classes so as to ensure a limit of 15 students per class, and facilities for free and accessible online learning. More staff and services have also been demanded for the public transport infrastructure.

The 24 hours strike spread in large workplaces and factories with almost complete participation in public transport, public hospitals and protests all over Greece. strike paralyzed all public transport including rail, metro and tram services across the country and ferry services to the islands. Civil servants joined the strike demanding better workplace protections against coronavirus. Greek journalists also participated in the strike with two-hour work stoppage during which no news broadcasts was aired. Flights were canceled or rescheduled though the air traffic controllers called off their strike after a court ruled their participation as illegal.

The government filled the city centre of Athens and other big cities with riot police, armored vehicles and police to suppress the movement. Police detained seven trade union activists and fined hundreds of Euros to dozens of workers and union functionaries for participation in the Strike and demonstrations.

### **Workers General Strike in Italy**

Called by the USI (Unione Sindacale Italiana) central trade union, representing public workers; the national general strike by the public sector worker in Italy on 25 November seriously affected the public services paralyzing all modes of transports, schools and healthcare. Domestic and international flights were seriously affected as the air controllers were on strike.

The strike was mainly in protest against attempts of privatisation by the government, in defence of workers' rights and safety at workplaces during Covid-19 pandemic. The private sector workers, particularly in the small scale sector, have been facing serious job loss and wage cuts during Covid pandemic.

### **Workers General Strike in South Korea**

Around 2 lakh workers participated in the nationwide workers general strike in South Korea on November 25. The strike was organized by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) in protest against the proposed amendment in labour laws that would prohibit the workers from occupying a worksite while on strike. The strikers held demonstrations across the country. 30,000 workers at Kia Motors also went on strike against job cuts and for higher wages. The Prime Minister had called to KCTU to cancel strikes and rallies on the grounds of threatened Covid-19 spread and students exams; and held a meeting of Central Disaster Management; and called on police and local governments to ensure Covid restrictions.

### **Workers General Strike in France**

CGT's public service trade unions including in transport, postal, education sectors called a nationwide public sector workers strike on 5 December and to prepare ground for 'rolling' strikes. France experienced one of the biggest strikes in decades as public sector workers are protesting against President Macron's proposed 'pension reforms' with single national pension plan replacing the existing sector wise 44 different pension plans.

The strike paralysed the entire transport system including rail, metro, road, air and waterways. La Poste (postal department) has been affected by the strikes for several weeks. "Working conditions and the protection of public service" are interlinked, said CGT-Fapt. The French national rail company, SNCF, canceled 90% of its trains and metro in Paris closed 11 lines. France's teaching staff were on nationwide strike. The Eiffel Tower and the Orsay Museum, the two biggest landmarks of Paris had also reported reduced staff. Philippe Martinez, leader of CGT, told reporters that the strike would not end 5 December evening.

French newspaper, Le Monde, reported that more than 1.80 lakh striking workers joined in the street demonstrations in 30 different parts of France on 5 December.



# International Solidarity

*With Workers General Strike in India. Message from World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU)*

During the last 6 years, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the oldest, and only class-oriented international trade union organization, has been monitoring, condemning, and fighting against the neoliberal, anti-grassroots policies implemented by the Modi government, crushing the rights and living standards of the country's workers, farmers, and people. The coordinated efforts of the Indian bourgeoisie to improve its position in the intra-capitalist competition include further devaluation of the labor force, shrinking of the state benefits and pensions, privatization and corporatization of the public sectors and industries, reactionary changes in labor and farmer laws and codes. In addition, the complete indifference to protecting the popular strata from the impacts of the pandemic creates a suffocating situation for ordinary people who are plagued by unemployment, hunger, and misery.

***We demand the release of all the arrested trade unionists*** : Workers' experience has shown that anti-labor policies hand in hand with authoritarianism, oppression, and state violence against the workers' struggles. We strongly condemn the arrest of at least fifty union leaders during the numerous sectoral and regional activities that took place all over India in the framework of the preparations of tomorrow All India Strike. The efforts of the Modi government to sabotage the strike will come to nothing. We demand the release of all the arrested trade unionists and an end to all provocations and violations of the trade union's rights and freedoms.

***The struggles in India give hope to workers all over the world*** : The militant struggle in India with the pioneering and leading role of the class unions – members of the WFTU - proves the strength of the workers and gives hope and courage to the oppressed employees around

the world. The escalation of the struggles in recent years is remarkable and commendable with massive strikes and activities in all sectors and regions and also nationally with the impressive and admirable nationwide strike that paralyzed the country with the participation of 250 million workers on January 8th, 2020.

***We join our voice with the class-oriented trade unions in India*** : The World Federation of Trade Unions, continuing its support to the workers' struggles in the length and breadth of the world, expresses its internationalist solidarity and supporting the demands of the countywide strike that is going to take place on November 26th, 2020, against the anti-labor, anti-farmer and anti-national policies of the Indian government.

On behalf of the 105 million workers, represented by the WFTU, we join our voice with the Indian working class demanding: (1) Cash transfer of Rs.7,500 per month for all non income tax paying families; (2) 10 kg free ration per person per month to all needy; (3) Expansion of MGNREGA to provide 200 days' work in a year in rural areas at enhanced wages; extension of employment guarantee to urban areas; (4) Withdraw all anti farmer laws and anti worker labour codes; (5) Stop privatisation of public sector including the financial sector and stop corporatisation of Govt run manufacturing and service entities like Railways, Ordinance Factories, Ports etc.; (6) Withdraw the draconian circular on forced premature retirement of Government & PSU Employees; (7) Provide Pension to all, scrap NPS and restore earlier Pension, improve EPS-95.

*(The above text was signed by 42 trade union leaders and organizations from 30 countries)*

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***In Solidarity with Samyukta Kisan Morcha. #StandWithFarmers***



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