

# The Voice of the Working Woman



2 August 2019

## Protest against Labour Codes





# CITU General Council Decisions on Working Women

(adopted at the GC meeting held on 7-10 August 2019, Hassan, Karnataka)

## Organisational

1. Ensure implementation of all CITU decisions on working women.
2. Separate time slot to be allotted for a thorough review of the functioning of the AICCWW(CITU) at the 16<sup>th</sup> CITU all India Conference to be held in January 2020.
3. Similarly, a proper review of the work of the state coordination committees of working women to be done in the CITU state conferences with separate time allocation. A questionnaire will be sent to the states to facilitate the review.
4. Ensure adequate representation of women in delegation in CITU conferences with a minimum of 25%. Women in the delegation from all the unions in states proportionate to their membership to ensure representation of women from all sectors. Adequate women's representation in all levels of elected committees in CITU.
5. State and district conventions of working women to be planned in all states along with the CITU conferences.
6. National Convention of working women to be held in March 2020. All state conventions to be completed before this.
7. As per the CITU decision in its golden jubilee year, make efforts to double the women membership of CITU in 2020. Improve the percentage of women in CITU membership
8. Special efforts to develop women cadre at all levels
9. Increase the circulation of CITU journals

## Movemental Tasks

10. A national workshop on POSH Act and its implementation, along with AIDWA and AILU
11. Two/three day National seminar/workshop on various aspects of women's labour to formulate specific demands in December 2019.
12. A nationwide campaign for two months on these issues, culminating in 'Jail Bharo' of working women on International Women's Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020, supported by all sections of women. Call can be given from CITU conference.

*The Voice  
of the  
Working Woman*

*Monthly Journal of the AICCWW(CITU)*

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### **Inside**

	<i>Page</i>		<i>Page</i>
CITU General Council	4	India Today	18
AICCWW	8	Code on Wages Bill	20
Women on the Move	10	Resolutions	23
Jammu & Kashmir	14	International	25

Total pages - 28  
(including cover pages)

# We, The Workers...

**'We Are Workers. We Build The Nation. We Protect The Nation. We Have Been. We Always Will'** – This was the proud assertion of the working class expressed through the CITU general council.

The CITU general council firmly announced that it is the workers and the toiling people of India who create the wealth of the country, who protect its wealth and its people.

On the eve of the Independence Day this year, thousands of workers across the country took a pledge to protect the nation from the predatory attacks of the big corporates and businesses, foreign and domestic, on our natural resources and on our public sector – all of which belong to the nation. The workers also pledged to unitedly protect the basic Constitutional rights of the people, who constitute the nation, who are the nation.

On the other hand, on Independence Day, the Prime Minister also talked of those who create the wealth of our country. *'Let us never see wealth creators with suspicion. Only wealth is created, wealth will be distributed... Those who create wealth are India's wealth and we respect them'*, he is reported to have said.

Anybody who thinks he was talking about the workers, is, alas, grossly mistaken. It is reported that this was meant to give a 'strong signal to government departments that they should shun 'tax terrorism' and stop creating bureaucratic hassles, obviously for the big corporates, domestic and foreign – to facilitate 'Ease of Doing Business'. It is quite natural that the director general of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) welcomed the Prime Minister's statement. *'PM's encouraging words on the ease of doing business and Rs 100 lakh crore infrastructure mission will go a long way to reassure entrepreneurs about growth prospects'*, he said.

Everyday the media is carrying reports of the slowdown in the economy, of slackening of demand even for daily needs like soap, shampoo, oil etc, particularly in the rural areas, the decline in the sales of automobiles including two wheelers, of houses built not being sold etc. Agriculture continues to be in crisis.

Instead of new job creation, which the BJP did not even promise in the recent Parliament elections, what we are witnessing today is the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs in various sectors. Instead of addressing this issue, of increasing the earnings of the workers and toiling people, the BJP government and its Prime Minister Modi are busy providing largesse to the big corporates so they can protect their profits, at the cost of the people and the nation as a whole.

Those in governance have been talking of 'releasing animal spirits' of investors; of 'curbing the jungle raj of labour laws'. It is now clear that what they mean by this is facilitating the corporate cannibals to subject workers to inhuman exploitation and for the expropriation of natural resources to protect their profits.

Votes from the people; service to the corporate masters!

It is in this background that the CITU general council's decision, not only to heighten joint and independent trade union struggles but to strengthen worker peasant unity by joining the Kisan Sabha in large numbers in its demonstrations on 5<sup>th</sup> September, assumes significance.

Converting the present defensive struggles into offensive struggles to defeat the neoliberal policies and the communal divisive agenda of the present BJP government must be the agenda of the working class today

# **‘We Are Workers. We Build The Nation. We Protect The Nation. We Have Been. We Always Will’**

This was the slogan of the CITU general council that was held in Hassan in Karnataka on 7-10 August 2019. The general council called upon all its affiliated unions and committees to display this slogan prominently during the night long ‘jagaran’ that will be held on the night of 14<sup>th</sup> August, on the eve of the Independence Day.

On that occasion, tens of thousands of workers will be taking the pledge ‘The India I dream of’ to continue the fight to achieve that India, which their forefathers dreamed of while fighting for Independence from British imperialism.”

The general council of CITU asserted that the need of the hour was to challenge the anti worker, anti people and anti national Modi 2 government on all fronts and force reversal of its regressive policies. The situation called for heightening joint and independent struggles against the neoliberal regime, against the communal divisive agenda and against the repressive, authoritarian and anti democratic practices of the BJP government at the centre.

The incessant rains that lashed Hassan during the entire duration of the general council, without any respite, could not dampen the spirit of struggle of the members. Nor could the bad weather diminish the enthusiasm of the volunteers, who worked hard to make all the necessary arrangements for the smooth conduct of the meeting.

The general council of CITU decided to extend solidarity and participate in full strength in the demonstrations called by the All India Kisan Sabha on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019. It has called upon all CITU committees to take the initiative to organise joint worker peasant demonstrations in as many centres/ locations as possible

The CITU general council welcomed the decision of the defence employees to go on a 30 day strike from 20<sup>th</sup> August 2019 against the decision of the Modi 2 government to corporatise the defence production units. It extended solidarity with the defence employees and called upon all its units, particularly where the ordinance factories are located, to mobilise workers in large numbers from all sectors in support of the struggle against the measure to dismantle the public sector and destroy our indigenous manufacturing capacity in favour of foreign corporates.

It also decided to stand with the workers of steel, railways, BSNL and other public sector undertakings who are fighting against handing over these units to private corporates, domestic and foreign, in the name of disinvestment, privatisation, strategic sale etc. The general council decided to organise conventions involving all the trade unions, including those of the railway employees, against the 100 days plan of the government in the Railways including the corporatisation of the production units and introduction of private trains in major routes. It has decided to conduct a wide campaign among the people explaining the impact of the plan on the common people who use the railways as a means of cheap transport in their daily lives. Demonstrations will also be held in front of the railway stations.

The Modi led BJP government is going ahead with its so called ‘reforms’ process, amending labour laws, privatisation and land acquisition to make the foreign investors ‘happy’ and further

facilitate 'Ease of Doing Business'. In view of this, the CITU general council decided to conduct a wide campaign to prepare the working class in the country for heightened joint struggles including strike at the appropriate time, to be decided by the joint trade union movement. It has reiterated that the call to 'Reach the Unreached' and 'Link up issues with policies and expose the politics that determine the policies' must be implemented.

The CITU general council endorsed the decisions of the meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (AICCWW – CITU), which was held one day prior to the meeting of the general council, on 6<sup>th</sup> August in Bengaluru. It decided to hold a national convention on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace (POSH) Act along with AIDWA and AILU and conduct to a national seminar on various aspects of women's labour. The general council also endorsed the proposal of AICCWW, of a two month campaign on the specific issues of women workers culminating in a massive 'jail bhara' programmes all over the country on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the details of which would be finalised in the 16<sup>th</sup> conference of CITU. On the occasion of the golden jubilee of CITU, the general council called upon all the state committees to double their women membership, as part of the decision to reach 1 crore membership by the end of the year.

The Hassan general council of CITU was attended by 355 members including office bearers, from 22 states. 44 of them were women. The meeting started with the hoisting of the CITU flag by Hemalata, president of CITU, who also presided over the inaugural session.



Vijaya Kumar, honorary president of the reception committee welcomed the participants. Three important resolutions – Against the BJP government's authoritarian onslaught on Constitutional order, federalism and democracy in Jammu and Kashmir, Against Attacks on Dalits, Adivasis and Minorities and On Violence Against Women and Children were adopted unanimously in the inaugural session. The resolutions were placed by Tapan Sen, general secretary, AR Sindhu, secretary of CITU, and AK Padmanabhan, vice president, respectively. In addition, a resolution on the devastating floods in Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and parts of Gujarat, calling upon the working class to provide all possible help and assistance to the flood affected people, was placed by G Sukumaran and supported by S Varalakshmi, both vice presidents of CITU, was also adopted by the general council unanimously.

ML Malkotia, treasurer of CITU placed the condolence resolution.

In her presidential address, Hemalata asserted that this is not the time for routine meetings and ritualistic speeches. The Modi government is stubbornly pursuing the neoliberal policies that have been widely acknowledged as unsustainable and are discredited globally. The working class across the world is struggling and searching for alternatives. The so called 'establishment parties' are losing their credence. Left forces are gaining wherever they have stood unflinchingly with the working class. Where they have wavered, the rightwing forces are gaining ground. In India, the joint trade union call to defeat the 'anti worker, anti people, anti national' BJP in the elections did not get the support of the workers, who had just a couple of months ago joined the unprecedented two days' strike. This necessitates introspection on how far we have been able



to 'reach the unreached' and tried to expose the BJP's politics in the elections. It is also necessary to self critically examine our methods of work to see whether we have internalised the directions of the Kozhikode document on organisation, adopted unanimously in the last general council meeting.

The general secretary of CITU, Tapan Sen, dealt with the situation in the country and the struggles of the working class. He said that the Budget

placed by the finance minister, the unscrupulous method of fixation of the minimum wages, the passage of the Code on Wages Bill, the Motor Vehicles Bill, the amendments to the UAPA and the Right to Information Acts etc all demonstrate the arrogance and aggression of the Modi 2 government, which returned to power with an increased mandate. He asserted that further authoritarian and fascistic onslaughts were on the anvil. The only way before the working class is to intensify independent and joint struggles involving the entire working class as well as all other toiling sections of the people. He emphasised that the Golden Jubilee observance of CITU and the centenary of the first central trade union of the country, AITUC, should be utilised to heighten the struggles to defeat this fascistic regime, which poses a big danger to the unity of the people and integrity of our country. CITU has to be developed as a countrywide strong and militant workers' organisation to meet the challenges ahead. Special efforts have to be made to convert the CITU's expanding influence into organisational strength, by increasing its membership.

The general council expressed its strong indignation when it came to know about the detention of the Left leaders, Sitaram Yechury, general secretary of CPI (M) and D Raja, general secretary of CPI at Srinagar airport on 9<sup>th</sup> August. They were not allowed to visit Yusuf Tarigami a CPI (M) MLA in the dissolved J&K state assembly and is also the president of the state committee of CITU. Tarigami was kept under house arrest and was not keeping well. Despite the pouring rain the general council members held a militant demonstration on the street and vented their anger at the attacks on the democratic rights of the people.

75 general council members participated in the discussion on the general secretary's report. Many of them gave valuable suggestions. In addition 5 invitees also spoke in the meeting. Hannan Mollah, General Secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha, greeted the general council and informed about the decision of AIKS to organise demonstrations all over the country to commemorate the 5<sup>th</sup> September Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally of last year. He called for further strengthening of joint actions and solidarity between the working class and the peasantry. His message received tremendous appreciation from the general council members.

For the first time, simultaneous translation in six languages - Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu was tried experimentally in this general council meeting. Despite some initial hiccups it was more or less successful and the members appreciated the effort and requested to continue it in the ensuing CITU conference in Chennai.

After Tapan Sen summed up the discussion and clarified certain points raised in the course of the deliberations, the general council unanimously adopted the general secretary's report. The

proposal of the CITU secretariat, on the concrete immediate tasks, placed by Tapan Sen and the statement of accounts placed by Malkotia were also adopted unanimously.

The proposals related to the 16<sup>th</sup> conference of CITU conference to be held in Chennai on 23-27 January 2020, placed by Tapan Sen were also accepted unanimously. The venue will be named 'Md Amin Nagar' after Md Amin, veteran trade union leader and former general secretary of CITU; the dais will be named 'Sukomal Sen Manch', veteran historian of the trade union movement, leader of the state government employees and also former vice president of CITU. The venue of the public meeting will be named after Singaravelu, who celebrated the first May Day in India, in Chennai on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1923.

In her concluding address Hemalata thanked the reception committee, the translators, the cultural team and all the volunteers for the excellent arrangements and their hard work. She urged all the general council members to keep in mind the spirit of the tasks taken up in the meeting in the context of the ultimate constitutional objective of CITU. All efforts must be made for their effective implementation, she stressed.

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### **The India I Dream Of**

India where work, physical or mental, is equally recognised, respected and acknowledged

India, where right to work, livelihood and life are guaranteed as fundamental rights

India, whose economic self reliance and political sovereignty are not compromised or surrendered

Where all women and men are treated equally and with dignity

Where people lead a life of peace and satisfaction without worry about work, food, housing, health and education

Where everyone has opportunities to develop her or his mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent

Where people are bound with love, friendship and live in harmony and mutual respect

Where caste, creed, religion, region, or gender don't divide people

The India dreamt by our forefathers, the millions of workers who fought for Independence from British imperialism

I pledge to continue the fight till we achieve such an India



# All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) Meeting



A meeting of the General Council Tier of the AICCW (CITU), was held 6 August 2019 at EMS Bhawan, Bangalore, just before the meeting of the General Council of CITU on 7-10 August 2019 at Hassan, Karnataka. K Hemalata, President and Tapan Sen General Secretary were present in the meeting which was presided over by Malati Chittibabu. 48 out of 73 members participated in the meeting. Tapan Sen made the initial remarks explaining the current political situation and the responsibility of working women in the

movement.

A R Sindhu, Convenor placed the report. The report gave a self critical review of the implementation of decisions. It is noted that only eight states held the state level working women's conventions after their CITU conferences. Even the decision to have a discussion on "Working Women- A Class Perspective" commission paper to have a clear and unified understanding on the functioning of the coordination committees was not implemented by most of the states.

The report also noted the recent trends and developments in the world of work in India. The recently released Periodic Labour Force Survey shows a continuous decrease in the women's work participation rate in India. It has fallen from 41.6% in 2004 to 22% in 2017-18. This captures only one aspect of the women's work participation, of those who come under the definition of 'principal status worker'. With the continuing agrarian crisis and increasing unemployment, more and more women are coming into the labour force, seeking jobs. They are forced to do precarious jobs which do not even count as 'work' and are not accounted for in statistics. It is essential to take these jobs into account to assess both the extent of exploitation of women as well as their contribution to the economy.

Women's wages are shockingly low. Wages of women are 34% less than that of men in rural areas and 19% less in urban areas in our country. India has the highest gender pay gap. It increases with high qualifications and seniority.

The majority of women workers do not get maternity benefits and crèche facilities. Night work is being imposed on them. Recently the Mines Act has been amended to allow women to work underground at night, in the name of 'equality'.

Recent reports of women labourers in sugarcane cutting being forced to remove their wombs and the women garment workers being given pills to avoid menstruation expose how the capitalist system, driven solely by the profiteering goal, totally ignores even women's health. Violence against women and children, including sexual harassment at the workplace, is increasing daily and rising to alarming proportions under neoliberalism. Religious fundamentalism is making things worse for women.

It is very important for us to bring these issues to the forefront and build a movement and struggles, the report pointed out. Accordingly, some organizational and movemental tasks were suggested.



Sunitha Kurien, Convenor Kerala CCWW reported the activities taken up by the state ccww during the period including that in elections where women worker's squads were formed and door to door campaign was conducted.

Shubha Shamim, Maharashtra explained their interventions in the issue of women sugarcane cutters in Beed district. A fact finding team was set up by the ccww and the issues taken up with the authorities.

Harjeet kaur from Punjab said that in the state a ccww is yet to be formed.

Hyda Helen from Tamil Nadu gave a detailed account of the activities in the state including the state working women's convention. She reported that 20% women's representation in the delegation in the ongoing CITU district conferences has been made mandatory in the state.

Rema from Telengana reported that they are reorganizing the working women's coordination committees in the state. She narrated the struggles in various sectors by women workers.

Madhumita Bandopadhyaya from West Bengal reported about the state level convention and the future tasks.

K Subbaravamma from AP narrated the struggles in different sectors and also the implementation of the AICCWW decisions.

Yamuna Gaonkar, Karnataka said that a review of the functioning of the CCWWs must be taken up in the ensuing conference. She shared the experience of the women's charter for elections and the campaign thereafter held in the state.

Panchali Bhattacharya from Tripura explained the serious situation in the state where basic trade union rights and democratic rights are denied. She narrated the story of Sanjita Das, an anganwadi worker, who filed her nomination in the three tier panchayat elections. Most of the left front candidates were not even allowed to file nominations. In the elections BJP won 85% of the seats unopposed. Those who had filed nominations were threatened and made to withdraw their nominations and thus BJP candidates got elected in 97% of seats. Sanjita was being forced to join the BMS union or leave the job. She was dismissed. Her husband was also removed from his job. But she did not surrender and she went ahead to contest the election which she won with a good majority.

Surekha from Haryana spoke about the responsibilities of women activists and their double burden. In spite of their hard work they are looked down upon

Kamala from Delhi explained the initiatives they took in the state and asked for further guidance from the centre.

Ranjana Nirula from Centre who is the working editor of 'The Voice of the Working Woman' called upon all the states to enroll more subscribers for the magazine. She also asked the centre and states to review the functioning of the ccwws, and suggested that delegation of women to the forthcoming CITU conference should proportionate to their strength in the membership.

Karthyayani from Kerala suggested a special organizational drive on the occasion of the golden jubilee of CITU to increase the women membership in CITU.

Deepa Rajan from Kerala spoke about the experience of the insensitive attitude of some unions regarding working women's issues and formation of women's sub committees.

Beemabeevi from Kerala explained the issues of women are facing in the traditional sectors like cashew.

Prema from Kerala asked for the centre to intervene in those states which fail to implement the decisions.

A R Sindhu replied to the discussions after which the future tasks were adopted (Given on page 2). This was placed in the CITU general council meeting and was adopted.

K Hemalata concluded the meeting. She called upon the committees to take up the tasks set by the last convention in organizing various sectors.

## Convention of Women IT Employees



The Women's Convention organised by the Young Workers Collective #YWC as part of its General Conference held on 21st July at YWCA Hall, Bangalore.

The Convention discussed various aspects of the problems faced by the working class in general and working women in particular.

Growing concern has been raised over the safety and security of young workers working in India's IT capital, especially women and night shift workers. Owing to the ever-pervasive covetousness of the capitalists, the workers are forced to stay late at night to fulfill impossible project deadlines yet the managements are failing to provide any measures to ensure their safety. The Convention demanded that the authorities to wake to this need and also called for enforcement of strict safety guidelines to companies to ensure the safety and security of the workers.

Irrespective of the field of work, all sections of working women are facing huge discrimination in the wages paid to them as compared to those paid to male workers. It is this cruel utilization of deep rooted elements of patriarchy, that allows the capitalist to exploit the human labour of women workers at cheaper cost. The convention demanded strict measures to ensure that all workers are paid equal wages for equal work, irrespective of their gender.

The convention resolved to conduct organized campaigns to make women workers aware of their right to equality at the workplace, and also to stage organized agitations to force the authorities and Government to protect this right.

In the name of 'accelerating growth' the Central Government is going to implement big changes in the labor legislation. Under the guise of simplifying the laws, the government is merging the labor laws, callously ignoring the measures which are there to protect the employees, thereby creating a rigged system favouring those who exploit the workers.

The government seeks to combine various legislations into just four categories completely ignoring their complexities and the very purpose of safeguarding workers rights. The Convention passed a resolution committing to fight resolutely against the central government attempts to tamper with labour legislations.

The Women's Convention was inaugurated by CITU All India Secretary AR Sindhu. CITU Karnataka State President S Varalakshmi and YWC General Secretary Lenil Babu addressed the convention. YWC Joint Secretary Akshaya Balan presided over the convention.

## ASHA Workers Continue Their Struggles

The meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of ASHA workers, held in New Delhi on 23 July 2019, was attended by members from 12 states – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Kashmir, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Telengana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal, and the Centre.

The large participation in the 2 day strike on 8, 9 January by ASHA workers and facilitators in the states where we have unions was noted. In fact the ASHA workers in many states have been in continuous struggle in many states, before and after the elections. They took part in the election campaign for the Left candidates in several states. Through their struggles the ASHA workers have made gains in some states, such as Andhra Pradesh, where the government has announced a monthly payment of Rs 10,000 for.

These intensified activities are reflected in an increase in our membership in some states. In the forthcoming period the emphasis will be on agitation and struggles along with cadre development through education and training programmes.

The following campaign, struggle and organisational decisions were taken:

1. To participate in the Samuhik Jagran on 14 August, along with the CITU committees, and to campaign for this, emphasizing the demands of strengthening the public health system and infrastructure.
2. To submit memoranda at the block /district level on the demands related to Minimum wages and policy on 3<sup>rd</sup> September.
3. For an all India strike of Scheme workers on the demand of minimum wages, in January 2020.
4. A workshop will be conducted for active cadre from Hindi speaking states in December.
5. An organizational convention of our ASHA worker and facilitator unions to be held. in order to constitute a new committee.

## Stop Privatisation of Mid Day Meal Programme

Very recently the BJP-IPFT coalition Government of Tripura decided that the Mid Day Meal programme of Tripura will be handed over to the 'Akshay Patra' foundation.

On 25 July the CITU, along with Mid Day Meal workers, organized a protest programme against this move. The procession marched throughout the streets of Agartala city, shouting slogans, and assembled on the premises of the education department. Manik Dey, State President and Sankar Datta, State General Secretary of CITU were present in the procession.

The Mid-Day-Meal workers of the Tripura Mid Day Meal Workers Union have met the joint Director, elementary education, two times. But all was in vain. The union wrote a letter to the state Education Minister twice, seeking a meeting with a deputation, but he did not respond. Moreover, not a day passes in the state when there is no attack on a CITU activist.

A protest meeting was held In front of the Education Dept. addressed by Manik Dey and Sankar Datta. Manik Dey explained the political situation of Tripura after the BJP came to the power. He criticized the anti people policies of the BJP Government. He gave a call to Mid Day Meal workers as well as all scheme workers to intensify their struggles to protest against privatization of the schemes. Sankar Dutta appealed to the workers to organize massive protests all over the state against the privatization of the Mid-Day-Meal scheme.

After conclusion of the protest meeting a four member delegation comprising of Panchali Bhattacharjee, Samar Chakraborty, Haridas Paul and Manika Datta Roy met with the Director of Education and discussed with him on the 3 main points in the demand charter.

The discussion was held in a healthy environment but the Director did not give any assurance regarding not handing over of the Mid-Day-Meal programme to 'Akshoy Patra'.

## Decisions of Midday Meals Workers Federation

The working committee meeting of the MDMWFI held on 23 July, 2019 at New Delhi was presided over by the national president S. Varalakshmi. Comrades from Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, U.P., Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra and Karnataka attended this meeting

The meeting took the following decisions

### Agitational Decisions

1. Maximum participation of MDM workers in the protest action by CTUs on 2 August, 2019.
2. Participation in CITU call for 'Samuhik Jagaran' on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019
3. **Organise** protest actions all over the country against the continuous neglect of MDM workers by the BJP government. In this protest the slogan will be – Provide Minimum Social Security, Give status of fourth class employee and ban central kitchen in MDM schemes, Stop privatisation including handing over the scheme to NGOs. This protest may be organised at State/district/block level depending on the decision taken by the states. This will be the start of a series of agitational programmes against discrimination with scheme workers. On 3 September ASHA workers, On 4 September MDM workers and on 5 September Anganwadi Workers & Helpers will hold these protest actions.
4. A **three day national workshop** will be organised in Delhi in the first week of December in which delegates from Hindi Speaking and from states that understand Hindi will take part.
5. **Countrywide strike:** By developing agitation from local and state level in the second week of January 2020, country wide strike of scheme workers can be organised.
6. **CITU Golden Jubilee:** Yearlong celebrations/programmes will be organised on the occasion of CITU' golden jubilee and 100 years of India' first trade union. We must be a part of these events and take up task of developing working class consciousness in our activists on a priority basis.
7. **Remit the membership 2018 immediately to MDMWFI**
8. States where there has been an increase in the workers honorarium, will give Rs. 5/- per member as struggle fund to the centre for developing all India movement.
9. All states where state conferences are due, as per the constitution should plan and hold their conferences. MDMWFI conference will be held after March 2020.

## AIFAWH Working Committee Decisions

A meeting of the Working Committee of AIFAWH was held on 25-26 July 2019 at BTR Bhawan, New Delhi. Members from 17 States – AP, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, HP, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, UP and West Bengal participated.

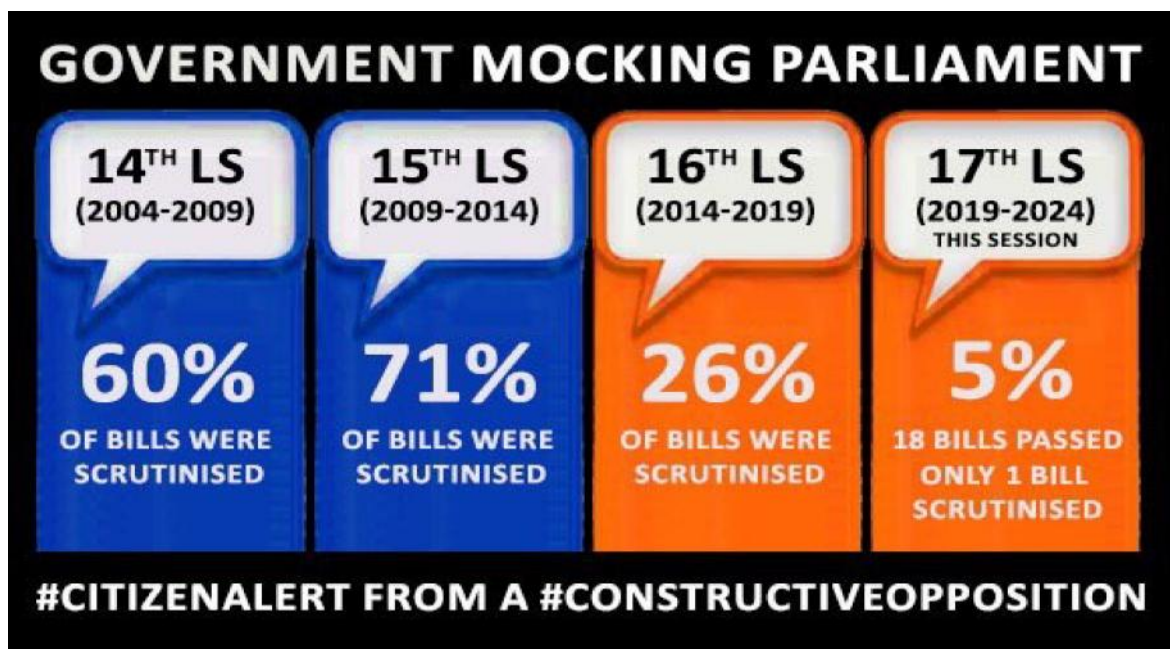


The meeting discussed various issues of anganwadi workers and helpers including the non-payment of remuneration for months and non implementation of the increased remuneration in many states as well as the anti labour policies of the Modi 2 Government.

The meeting also discussed in detail the draft New Education Policy of the government and its implications for ICDS. Two experts – Varsha from Alliance for ECCD and Usha Menon from Jodo Gyan- were called in this discussion for their inputs on the policy. The meeting also discussed the impact of opening up of pre-schools in government schools on anganwadis in many states.

The meeting took the following decisions on the movement

1. **Join the protest** called by the Central Trade Unions against the pro employer changes in labour laws **on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019**
2. Observe the CITU call on **Samohik Jagaran on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019** (eve of independence Day) highlighting the issue- **“Freedom from Malnutrition, Ill health and illiteracy”**
3. Mobilisation and protest **at project/block level on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019 (Teachers’ Day) against the unscientific pre-schools with a slogan ‘convert all pre-schools to anganwadis’ and also on the long pending demands of 45<sup>th</sup> ILC recommendations for minimum wages, pension and social security.** This struggle is to be coordinated with ASHA and MDM workers’ unions in the state.(Either on the same day or three consecutive days)
4. On the occasion of 150<sup>th</sup> Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, **Nationwide Campaign for one year** against communal hatred, mob violence, caste and gender discrimination with a slogan **“For real development and freedom; against hate and discrimination; for Harmony and Equality”** to be started on **2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019.**
5. Plan the activities on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of CITU (30 May 2019- 30 May 2020) and Centenary of first central trade union in India as per the CITU direction, with emphasis on political ideological development of cadres.
6. AIFAWH conference will be held on 17-20 November 2019 in AP. All state conferences to be completed before the all India Conference.



# **Dismantling of Jammu and Kashmir**

## **Authoritarian Assault on Democracy and Federalism**

Prakash Karat

The Modi government has conducted a lightning strike against the Constitution and federalism. Under the aegis of the Modi-Shah duo, Article 370 of the Constitution has been disemboweled and the subsidiary provision stemming from it – Article 35A – nullified. They have then proceeded to launch a brazen attack on the very existence of Jammu & Kashmir by abolishing the state and dividing it up into two centrally-run union territories. All this has been done by stealth and by keeping the people of Jammu & Kashmir under confinement and coercion. Even the manner in which the Presidential Order, the Resolutions and the Bills to annul Article 370 and dismantle the state of Jammu & Kashmir have been done through subterfuge constitutes a fraud on the Constitution.

There were, till August 6, 29 states in the Indian Union. With the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill being adopted by both the Houses of Parliament, this number has been reduced to 28 – an event unprecedented in the history of independent India. The BJP government has violated Article 3, the Constitutional clause which sets out the process for changing existing state boundaries or creating new ones, by not ascertaining the views of the state legislature concerned. Such a brazen attack on the rights of states and federalism has not been seen before.

Article 370 of the Constitution, which provides a special status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir, was incorporated by the Constituent Assembly in the Constitution. This Article provided status to Jammu & Kashmir different from the other states of the Indian Union. It was to have its own Constituent Assembly to draft its Constitution. Jammu & Kashmir was provided wider autonomy and the state legislature when it was set-up could decide which laws made by parliament could be applicable in the state.

### **Background of Article 370**

The princely state of Jammu & Kashmir before independence spanned the present state of Jammu & Kashmir which is part of India and the Pakistan-occupied part of Kashmir. The then Maharaja, Hari Singh, was not willing to accede to India. He had wanted to keep Jammu & Kashmir as an independent state. Hence, by August 15, 1947, no decision was taken. The National Conference, under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, was fighting against the feudal rule. This was part of the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist movement in the princely states.

It was only when the raiders from Pakistan, consisting mainly of Pathans from the North-West Frontier province, invaded and reached the outskirts of Srinagar that the Maharaja agreed to sign the instrument of accession which was done on October 26, 1947. The people of the Kashmir valley, who were with the National Conference, fought against the invaders. The Indian Army was airlifted to Srinagar and the raiding force was driven back.

It was in these circumstances that the Constituent Assembly, which was drafting the Constitution, incorporated Article 370 in it. Article 370 represented the compact (agreement) arrived at between the Indian State and the representatives of the Kashmiri people. It embodied the aspirations of the Kashmiri people to maintain their own identity and way of life known as *Kashmiriyat* within the Indian Union.

For the Indian State, the importance of this agreement was that, when the country was being partitioned on religious lines and the two nation theory

prevailed, the people of a Muslim majority state decided to throw in their lot with the Indian Union which was a secular state. During the partition, when riots engulfed north-western India, the Kashmir valley was a haven of peace and communal harmony.

### **Steady Erosion of Article 370**

The root cause of the problems in Kashmir stemmed from the going back on this commitment. From 1953 onwards, successive Congress governments at the centre took steps to erode the autonomy provided to Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370. The process of centralisation and denial of autonomy to the state advanced throughout the sixties, seventies and eighties. Article 370 was subverted to eliminate most aspects of the autonomy accorded to the state. From the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of 1954 onwards, there were 42 such orders upto 2010, that widened the scope of the central intervention and laws which was not envisaged at the time of the adoption of Article 370.

Through the centralising process, as ably documented by the legal expert A G Noorani, Article 370 was denuded of its real essence. 94 of the 97 entries (of topics of legislation) in the central list have been applied to J&K.

### **Alienation and Rise of Militancy**

Accompanying the erosion of autonomy was the denial of democracy and the suppression of democratic rights in the state. Elected governments were toppled and elections blatantly rigged time and again under central auspices such as during the 1987 election. It is in this background that the growing signs of alienation manifested in militancy and armed struggle with the slogan of 'Azadi'. Over a period of time, this discontent was utilised by the Pakistani-backed Islamist forces such as the Hizbul Mujahiddin and later the hardcore Pakistan-based terrorist groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

From the beginning, the Hindu communalist forces were against the movement led by the National Conference against feudal rule. The Praja Parishad, the predecessor to Jana Sangh, had in fact supported the Maharaja. The Jana Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha were totally opposed to Article 370 and any autonomy for Jammu & Kashmir. Given the Hindutva ideology, the RSS-backed Jana Sangh and later the BJP, have consistently opposed Article 370 given their idea of a unitarian centralised India. Moreover, their hostility stemmed from the fact that the Kashmir valley was a Muslim-dominated area.

### **Dismantling of J&K: Hindutva Design**

Just like their Islamist counterparts across the border, the Hindutvavadis and the RSS have wanted to trifurcate Jammu & Kashmir on religious lines, ie, separate Jammu which has a Hindu majority, the Muslim-dominated valley and Ladakh where the Buddhists are in a small majority. The existence of a composite state of Jammu & Kashmir, which has a Muslim majority, was anathema to them.

In the RSS-BJP narrative, the Kashmir valley is a hotbed of separatism and terrorism because of its religious composition. Their inherently anti-Muslim bias makes them hostile to any democratic aspirations of the Kashmiri people. When they advocated the abolition of Article 370, what they meant was that the people of the valley have to be suppressed under a security-State apparatus.

For the RSS and the Modi-Shah duo, Kashmir is a piece of territory which belongs to *Akhand Bharat*, while its people have to be treated as aliens because they are Muslim. The RSS and the BJP has been assiduously working to heighten the communal divide between Jammu and the valley. After the Modi government came to power at the centre in 2014, these efforts were scaled up significantly. The hardline approach of crushing civilian protests by force,

just like militancy, and shunning all political dialogue has worsened matters in the state. In the past few years, it is the local youth who have joined the militancy in ever increasing numbers. The figures show a steady rise in the number of security forces and militants killed.

### **A Vast Prison House**

The BJP rulers' contempt for the people of Kashmir became manifest when they launched a huge security operation before bringing the constitutional changes to the status of J&K in Parliament. Tens of thousands of additional central armed police forces and troops of the army were airlifted and deployed in the state. Leaders of the major political parties were detained; there was an information black-out with internet and mobile phone services shut down. The Amarnath yatra was called off and tourists sent back. Kashmir became a vast prison house. This is how a democratically-elected government treated the citizens of a state in whose name they have brought about drastic changes to their lives.

### **Specious Arguments**

The arguments set out by Home Minister Amit Shah in Parliament for the scrapping of Article 370 were the well-worn, self-serving ones of the Hindutva camp. He claimed that Article 370 had prevented the integration of J&K with India. In fact, the people of Kashmir willingly joined the Indian Union on the basis of the assurances which were later encapsulated in Article 370. It was this constitutional safeguard which assured the Kashmiri people that their future lay with India.

Amit Shah claimed that Article 370 had bred separatism and terrorism in J&K. The fact is, it is the erosion of autonomy under Article 370 and brutal suppression of democracy which sparked off the discontent and alienation that led to the rise of separatism and the growth of terrorism aided and abetted by Pakistan. It is only by restoring the autonomy and democracy denied to them that the alienation amongst the people could have been tackled.

Amit Shah accused Article 370 for the lack of development and economic growth in the state. It was the rise of militancy and the troubled situation in the last three decades which have hampered development and the opportunities for economic growth. Without arriving at a political solution and peace and normalcy being restored, Amit Shah's claim that there will be a spurt in development, employment and private investment would flow into the state is wishful thinking.

Finally, Amit Shah blamed Article 370 for the widespread corruption and loot of public funds in the state. It is true that Jammu & Kashmir suffers from corruption and a venal administration. However, the reality is that such a state of affairs stems from a lack of accountability and democratic processes. Jammu & Kashmir has been more or less a police state for long and subject to central rule for prolonged periods (altogether for a period of ten years). The centralised bureaucratic-security apparatus and their political accomplices, who are unaccountable, are the main source of corruption in the state.

### **Constitutional Chicanery**

The manner in which the Modi government has carried out the coup against the constitution is symptomatic of the authoritarian regime which has now been installed in the country. A Presidential Order under Article 370 is used to modify another article of the constitution – Article 367 – which, in turn, is utilised to revoke the essence of Article 370. By this ploy, the concurrence of the state legislature is usurped by the governor since the state is under president's rule.

That the stratagems of the ruling party and the coercive powers of the Modi government are having their effect on the opposition parties was also seen in the way the regional parties like



the BJD, YSRCP, TDP, TRS and others lined up in support of the anti-federal measures. It was a case of wielding the axe to cut their own feet, as the saying goes in Hindi. The Congress party, which was the original culprit in eroding the autonomy provided under Article 370, also came out as a divided house and was ineffectual in its resistance.

### **Long Struggle Ahead**

There will, no doubt, be a judicial appeal against the Presidential Order and the Bills adopted. But there is a long struggle ahead against the betrayal of the commitment made to the people of Kashmir. This struggle is not only about J&K but it is a struggle in defence of democracy and federalism in India.

The CPI(M) has consistently stood for safeguarding the autonomy provided to J&K under Article 370 of the constitution. It has opposed the erosion of that autonomy and powers under Article 370. Contrary to the stand of the BJP, we have been advocating maximum autonomy for the state and regional autonomy for the three regions under it – Jammu, the Valley and Ladakh. While firmly combatting the armed violence by the extremists and taking firm steps to stop cross-border terrorism, the Party has been calling for a political dialogue with all shades of political opinion within the state for a political settlement.

The BJP government's move to "integrate" J&K by scrapping Article 370 has evoked support among various sections of people. It is being seen as the decisive way to end the problem of separatism and terrorism – the official narrative propagated by the Modi government. But the harmful long term implications for J&K and the country are not before the people.

It is for the Left and democratic forces to take up this task of linking the struggle to safeguard the secular and composite heritage of J&K with the overall struggle against Hindutva authoritarianism and in defence of democracy, secularism and federalism in India.

*(Prakash Karat is a  
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**One of the refrains is that now J&K will be more developed. Look for yourself who is more developed (source NFHS-4):**

**Malnutrition levels among children (underweight):**

**Jammu and Kashmir: 16.6%**

**Uttar Pradesh: 39.5%**

**Whole of India: 35.8%**

**Infant Mortality Levels:**

**Jammu and Kashmir: 32/1000 live births**

**Uttar Pradesh: 64/1000 live births**

**Whole of India: 41/1000 live births**

**Current use of family planning methods**

**Jammu and Kashmir: 57.3%**

**Uttar Pradesh: 45.5%**

**Whole of India: 53.5%**

**Mothers who had 4 antenatal care visits**

**Jammu and Kashmir: 81.4%**

**Uttar Pradesh: 26.4%**

**Whole of India: 51.2%**

**Full Immunization**

**Jammu and Kashmir: 75.1%**

**Uttar Pradesh: 51.1%**

**Whole of India: 62%**

**Women experienced spousal violence**

**Jammu and Kashmir: 9.4%**

**Uttar Pradesh: 36.7%**

**Whole of India: 31.1%**

**Forwarded as Received**

## No One Killed Pehlu Khan

On August 14 a local court in Alwar, Rajasthan acquitted six out of the nine accused in the 2017 Pehlu Khan lynching case, **citing a lack of evidence**. The verdict has shocked the nation.

Three other accused are minors and proceedings against them are pending in the Juvenile Justice Board.

Khan and his companions – including his sons – were **attacked by cow vigilantes** in Alwar for transporting cattle on April 1, 2017. **Khan died** two days later, with the incident resulting in nationwide outrage.



*“The investigation in the case was already botched up – there was confusion over the cause of death that gave the ‘benefit of doubt’ to the accused. Even the name of the six accused named by Khan in his dying declaration were not mentioned in the statements of Khan’s, that have weakened the case,”* said Quasim Khan, who has provided legal help to the victims.

Reports by doctors at the private Kailash Hospital and government Behror CHC differed on the grounds of cause of death. Doctors at

Kailash Hospital stated to the police that Pehlu Khan had died of heart failure.

The post-mortem report by the Behror Community Health Care suggested assault, followed by heart failure, as the cause of death. *“Two contradictory causes of death would help the accused avoid conviction on charges of murder as they would claim Pehlu Khan died a natural death,”* said a lawyer.

A video record of the beating of Pehlu Khan and his sons that went viral was not considered as evidence by the court on grounds of its lack of clarity and the recorder not coming forward to testify. Again, the sting video by NDTV where one of the assailants admitted to his crime, asserting that he would kill many more like Khan, and boasting of his immunity from any action by the state police, was also not taken as evidence by the court.

In the statements of the four victims other than Pehlu, taken during the course of investigation, the six men named by Pehlu are not mentioned. The victims had said that the police deliberately omitted their names to weaken the case. Khan’s dying declaration was not signed by the doctor at the Kailash Hospital or by any magistrate, which made the declaration, otherwise a strong evidence, invalid.

The police had earlier given a clean chit to all six people accused of lynching Pehlu Khan as it had concluded that none of the accused were present at the location at the time of the attack based on call records.

An independent fact-finding report, released on August 16 at the Press Club of India, points at glaring gaps in the investigation carried out by the Rajasthan police which has weakened the case. Obviously, it was aimed at shielding the offenders.

## More Child Deaths in India than in War-torn Syria

According to a report by Reuters five lakh children have died in accidents over the last decade in India, more than the total child death rate in war-torn Syria.

A report of a study published August 7 titled 'Advancing Child Safety in India', revealed that the **average annual death toll of children (aged 0-18) in accidents in India per year is 60,000, out of which nearly 41% were due to road accidents.** Thirty-one per cent happened at home, 19% due to drowning and 6% due to falls.

The report says **165 children die in India every day due to an unintentional injury.** These statistics were the first comprehensive numbers, which the study, the result of a year-long effort by Nimhans and US based Underwriters Laboratories, hopes to establish as a benchmark on which the government can implement corrective steps.

The study examines the central question of child safety through a survey of 131 schools in and around Bengaluru, which discovered a slew of safety lapses at educational facilities, ranging from neglect of fire safety regulations, lack of safety officers, no training for emergencies and insufficient record-keeping. The additional commissioner of Karnataka Road Safety Authority described the government's effort to curb accidents as falling short. *"The number of road accident victims of all ages has hovered steadily around 1.4 lakh for the last 20 years. That we have not been able to reduce this figure shows our efforts have been limited,"* he said, adding that the threat of fines have not fazed bad drivers, partly blamed for the deaths.

The other offenders, according to the Commissioner for Public Instruction, are parents. *"Fifty-one per cent of children are transported to schools on private vehicles, like rickshaws and vans which do not have proper safety measures. If parents registered these vehicles with schools, we could ensure compliance with safety norms,"* he said.

## No Girl Born in 132 Villages in Uttarkashi in 3 Months

At a time when the centre has been promoting its "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" programme, sex ratio at birth data from 132 villages in Uttarkashi district in Uttarakhand revealed that no girl child was born in these areas in the last three months.

According to data, 216 children were born in 132 villages of the district in the last three months, but not a single girl was among the newborns, which has left the district administration baffled. *"We have identified areas where the number of girl childbirth is zero or in single-digit numbers. We are monitoring these areas to find out what is affecting the ratio. A detailed survey and study will be conducted to identify the reason behind it,"* said the Uttarkashi District Magistrate. He held an emergency meeting with ASHA workers and asked them to increase vigilance in these areas and submit a report over the data.

A social worker alleged *"Zero girl child birth clearly indicates the prevalence of female foeticide. It could not be just a coincidence"... "The government and the administration are not doing anything,"* she added.

# Code on Wages Bill – Modi Governments’ Return Gift to Corporates

R Karumalaiyan

The Narendra Modi government has brought the **Code on Wages Bill** as a payback to the bourgeoisie, both domestic and foreign, which had helped him retain power for a second term with an improved majority in the recent parliamentary election. The Bill, which seeks to replace four wage-related legislations on the pretext of “simplification” and “rationalisation”, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on July 23 and passed on July 30.

Immediately after assuming office, the present rightist political dispensation, true to its class character, embarked on two major projects of dispossession of “**Labour and Land** (peasantry)” that, in the face of fierce countrywide joint struggles by the working class and peasants, were postponed during its last tenure. It may be recalled that the government was compelled to withdraw its Land Acquisition Bill in the previous Lok Sabha. Similarly, the Wage Code Bill of 2017 was introduced on the last day of Monsoon Session (August 10), but due to sustained protests it was referred to the Parliament Standing Committee on Labour on November 21 and then allowed to face its natural death. Now, the government has brought it back as the Code on Wages Bill, 2019. It will replace four related legislations — the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

It is more relevant here to mention the Global Hunger Index brought out annually by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). India occupies 100th rank among the 119 nations with only two other Asian countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan, below it. But what IFPRI has highlighted is that, notwithstanding the official talk *ad nauseam* about “development” and the *jejune* crowing over India’s emerging as an “economic superpower”, ours is a woefully hungry nation, one of the hungriest in the world. It is a symptom of the lack of concern for the poor working people as the nation has no wage policy for low wage earners. Moreover, the ILO, in its India Wage Report, acknowledges that “*low pay and wage inequality persists in India despite 7 per cent annual average gross domestic product (GDP) growth over the past two decades*”.

According to Azim Premji University’s Center for Sustainable Development Report, more than 57 per cent of regular wage earners in India have been earning less than Rs 10,000 per month, well below the 7th Pay Commission-stipulated minimum wage of Rs 18,000. Around 59.3% of casual workers are getting a monthly wage of less than Rs 5,000. If we add the 25 per cent in the wage bracket of Rs 5,001-7,500, it is even more horrific that around 84.3% of casual workers are getting less than Rs 7,500 as wage. Contract workers account for 66.7 per cent in this wage bracket.

Given this precarious situation prevailing in our country and when all Central Trade Unions have been struggling for decent minimum wages for long, there must be a legal mechanism for the fixation and payment of minimum wages in the country.

So, when an enactment is being brought in, the main areas of concern for low-paid workers are – who is called a ‘worker’, who is an ‘employee’. Whether he/she will come under this Act or not? What is the definition of the term ‘wage’, how are wages being calculated/determined and on what basis/criteria are they determined under the Act?

Minimum wages can be an effective tool for addressing poverty and inequality. In India there are



a number of issues and concerns with regard to the setting and implementation of minimum wages. However, there are well-tested mechanisms/formulas that have been evolved over years, which also have a consensus of all stakeholders, i.e. central and state governments, all Central Trade Unions and employers bodies, that could be put in place to address these concerns and ensure that minimum wages have a substantial and beneficial impact on subsistence wage and low-paid workers. But the Code on Wages, 2019 miserably fails to address these two main concerns — that is on fixation of minimum wage and strict implementation thereon. The fixation has deliberately been kept under the discretion of the governments and the Bill seeks to dilute, virtually nullify, even the existing enforcement mechanisms so as to enable the employers evasion of any legal obligations.

The hidden agenda starts with the definition of ‘worker’ itself. There are two definitions — one as “employee” and another as “worker” – in order to facilitate the employer to misinterpret and discriminate between them and thereby escape from the Code itself. For instance, under clause 2(k) in the definition of “employee”, working journalists and other newspaper employees and sales promotion employees were excluded; whereas they are all included while defining ‘worker’ under the clause 2(z). In Chapter-III which deals with payment of wages, nowhere could we find the term “worker”. This may lead to their total exclusion from the purview of this Code.

Clause 2(y), which defines “wage”, simply includes basic pay, dearness allowance and retaining allowance, if any, only. It may be used for minimum wages. But for general usage of this term throughout the Code, as it deals with payment of wages and bonus etc., where the definition of wage ought to have vital meaning, it is fraught with great danger. Now the present Code excludes overtime allowances, payments of leave and holiday wages etc, from the definition of “wage”. On non-payment of these, the workers do not have any legal remedy under this Code. But the Payment of Wages Act of 1936, which is going to be repealed by this Code, included all these in the definition of “wage” for the purpose of legally ensuring its due payment.

Now we can understand the great conspiracy behind this so-called ‘simplification’ and amalgamation of four laws into one Code that deprives the workers of their right to approach any legal authority for the denial of holiday wage, any payment for leave period and overtime allowances. The irony is that even in the Code on Wages Bill of 2017, the ‘wage’ was to some extent clearly defined for the purpose of ensuring payment of wages as it was defined under the 1936 Act. Now the Modi regime is more emboldened to obediently serve and support the capitalist class at the cost of the working people.

### **Fixation of Minimum Wage**

The Minimum Wage Act of 1948 is older than even our Constitution. Though its objective is “*to prevent exploitation of the workers*”, it aimed at fixation of some sort of minimum wages which the employer must pay. In 1961 itself, the Supreme Court held that if an employer finds it difficult to pay minimum wage, he has no right at all to run the business. Yet the criteria for minimum wage remained elusive. When the Act was silent on criteria/norms of minimum wage, the 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) held in 1957 had resolutely stepped in and unanimously recommended the formula for fixing minimum wage. The recommendations and the Supreme Court directions are as follows:

- 1) Per capita food intake of at least 2,700 calories for a worker’s family comprising three units (two adults and two children)
- 2) Per capita cloth of at least 18 yards per annum

- 3) Provision of housing as per minimum rent charged by the government industrial housing scheme for low-income category
- 4) Fuel, lighting, miscellaneous expenditures to constitute 20 per cent of the total minimum wage
- 5) The Supreme Court judgment (1992) stipulated additional 25 per cent of the minimum wage for education, medical expense, recreation and provision of old age and marriage

Moreover, the 44th Indian Labour Conference's Committee on Minimum Wages unanimously recommended that "*there was consensus that the government may fix minimum wages as per the norms/criteria recommended by the 15th ILC (1957) and the directions of the Supreme Court in the 1992 case.*" When the Code on Wages Bill, 2017 was referred to the Parliament Standing Committee on Labour, it also unanimously recommended that "*this wage fixation would also be in accordance with the recommendations of the 44th ILC (2012) and reiterated at the 46th ILC (2015) to remove arbitrariness and unwarranted discretion in the fixation of minimum wage.*"

When a specific question was raised during Modi's first tenure on why the consensus recommendation of the Indian Labour Conference on the minimum wages formula was not incorporated in the Code on Wages Bill of 2017, it was replied that this was done to "*provide for flexibility, adaptability and to cater for dynamic requirements of various components...*" Is any more proof required for the government's intent on whose interests it wants to serve - the employers or the workers?

Making policies that help the big corporates, both domestic and foreign, amass wealth by increased exploitation of the workers and the toiling people, is a major part of the neoliberal agenda, which successive governments have been following since the last 25 years. The BJP government led by Modi has further hastened and perfected this disastrous policy.

The other major causality in the new Bill is the 'eight-hour working day'. Clause 13 of the 2019 Code deals with working hours and working day. Instead of categorically defining it, the Code states "*the appropriate government may fix the hours of work which shall constitute a normal working day inclusive of one or more specific intervals*". The most draconian feature is that over 48 crore workers, for whom the Code is supposedly going to apply, as is being touted by the ruling party, do not get to know their working hours from this Code and the sovereign Parliament has not been allowed to have its say on its largest working population's working hours.

### **On Inspection**

If minimum wage is denied or delayed, no authority of this land can enter any establishment unless he gets the necessary sanctions from Delhi. Inspectors who are supposed to ensure the implementation of this Code have been rechristened as "Inspector-cum-Facilitator" under Chapter-VII. Clause 51(2) says that "*the appropriate government may lay down the inspection scheme, in which (it) may provide for generation of a web-based inspection*". Thus, the binding character of inspection/enforcement is totally diluted, making the relevant provisions of the law practically meaningless for the workers.

The Code intends to produce perennial wage slaves in order to sustain the present ruthless exploitative system. The question of minimum wage is not merely an issue concerning low-paid workers, but also pertains to redistribution of wealth and equity and social justice.

Let our resolve be redoubled to rebuff the attack of Capital and their Masters.

## **Ensure Safety for Women Stop Atrocities, Violence against Women, Children! Stringent Punishment for the Guilty!**

The CITU general council meeting, being held in Hassan, Karnataka on 7-10 August 2019 expresses serious concern and anguish at the increasing violence and atrocities on women and children, which have seen a sharp rise under the BJP rule.

Incidents of rape, gang rape including of horrific cases of rape of small children and infants, in different parts of the country, are being reported in the media with increasing frequency. Neoliberalism with its vulgar commercialisation of women's bodies, being pursued by the BJP government, has created a fertile ground for the increase of such violence. The retrograde attitude of the RSS and the members of its *parivar*, including the BJP, which is guided by their commitment to *Manusmriti*, have highly contributed to the worsening of the situation.

It is appalling to see leaders of the ruling parties, particularly of the BJP and other outfits of the RSS, brazenly coming out in support of the culprits in such crimes against women and children, while the government and the administration remain totally apathetic. Conscious attempts are made to blame the victim and silence her instead of punishing the culprit.

The latest is the ghastly attack on the Unnao rape survivor, her family and her lawyer on 28<sup>th</sup> July in what is sought to be masqueraded as an accident. The Adityanath government in UP totally ignored the complaints of rape against the BJP MLA who allegedly raped the then minor girl when she sought his help for a job. It was only after she attempted to immolate herself in front of the house of the chief minister and the issue made headlines all over the country that the MLA was arrested. Her father was beaten up by the brother of the MLA and died in police custody. The MLA continued to threaten her and her family from inside the jail to withdraw the case. It is alleged that the police personnel in charge of her security informed the MLA in the jail about her travel. Two of her aunts were killed while the girl and her lawyer are fighting for life.

No action has been taken by the BJP against Kuldeep Sengar, its MLA. It is to be recalled that two BJP ministers in Jammu and Kashmir participated in the rally shamelessly carrying the national flag, demanding the release of the accused in the horrifying gang rape and murder of an eight year old girl in Kathua. The rape and murder were part of the conspiracy to evict the Bakarwals, to which community the girl belonged, from their customary rights to live in the area. No action has been taken by the BJP against the ministers.

The incidence of sexual harassment of women at workplace, both in the organised sector and unorganised sector, has also been increasing. The Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act remains only on paper. Complaints committees are not formed; their recommendations are not implemented. The culprits are rarely punished.

This meeting of CITU general council demands stringent punitive action against the culprits of violence and atrocities against women and children and also against those who encourage such acts directly or indirectly.

This meeting of the CITU general council calls upon all its affiliated unions, federations and state committees to mobilise all workers, male and female, irrespective of caste, religion or region against the acts of violence, harassment and discrimination against women. This is not just an issue to be addressed by women or their organisations alone. As a class oriented trade union CITU should be in the forefront in fighting against all types of injustice against women and children, in the forefront in demanding dignity and equality for women.

## **Stop Attacks on Dalits, Adivasis and Minorities! Punish the Guilty! Strengthen People's Unity!**

The CITU general council meeting, being held at Hassan, Karnataka, on 7-10 August 2019 strongly condemns the increased attacks on dalits, adivasis and minorities and demands firm action to stop these immediately.

The attacks on dalits, adivasis and minorities in the country have been rising since the BJP came to power with Modi as Prime Minister in 2014. They have escalated further under the Modi 2 regime. What is all the more alarming is that many of these incidents have been taking place with the utter complicity of the concerned BJP led governments and the administration while some BJP leaders have been publicly felicitating the culprits. This has emboldened the criminals, land mafia and the Hindutva communal forces under the patronage of the RSS.

Ten landless adivasi farmers, including three women were killed by the land grabbing mafia in Umbha village in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh. Truckloads of armed men opened fire on the adivasis who have been tilling the land for the last seventy years.

Names of popular gods are being used to threaten, lynch and kill people. It is a Constitutional right to follow or not to follow any religion and worship or to not worship any god. Since the Modi 2 government assumed office '*Jai Shriram*' is being used by certain groups associated with the RSS, not for worshipping, but as a war cry for intimidating, lynching and killing people, particularly the Muslim minorities. Totally degrading the secular credentials of the Parliament, BJP MPs started chanting '*Jai Shriram*' to heckle the Muslim and some opposition MPs while they were going to take the oath in Parliament. Several Muslim youth have been killed after forcing them to chant the slogan.

The National Crime Records Bureau data reveals that atrocities against Dalits rose tremendously under the BJP regime while the rate of conviction dropped drastically. The data from the Citizen's Religious and Hate Crime Watch shows that 90% of lynching that occurred during the last nine years, was after 2014; 62% of the victims were Muslims.

Such attacks are nothing but attempts to polarise society by using gods, cows, beef etc and divert their attention of people from their burning issues, while the government and the ruling classes go ahead appropriating people's wealth, exploiting the toiling people and attacking their rights; in short implementing the neoliberal agenda to benefit the landlords, big domestic and foreign corporations and businesses. Society is sought to be polarised, people's unity is sought to be disrupted, to weaken united struggles against the neoliberal policies.

It is the responsibility of the working class to defeat any machinations to disrupt harmony and to protect and strengthen unity of the entire working class and the toiling people irrespective of religion, caste and region. It is also the responsibility of the working class to resolutely fight against all kinds of social repression and defend the interest and rights of the most downtrodden of the society who are an integral part of the toiling class. This is of utmost importance and urgency when the Modi 2 government, blind with its increased numbers in the Parliament is speeding ahead with the so called 'reforms' bulldozing all opposition from the working class in different parts of the country.

This meeting of the CITU general council calls upon the entire working class to discharge this responsibility with utmost vigilance and diligence.

# The World's Wealthiest Family Gets \$4 Million Richer Every Hour

The 25 wealthiest dynasties on the planet control \$1.4 trillion

The numbers are mind-boggling: \$70,000 per minute, \$4 million per hour, \$100 million per day.

That's how quickly the fortune of the Waltons, the clan behind Walmart Inc., has been growing since last year's Bloomberg ranking of the world's richest families. At that rate, their wealth would've expanded about \$23,000 since you began reading this. A new Walmart associate in the U.S. would've made about 6 cents in that time, on the way to an \$11 hourly minimum.

Even in this era of extreme wealth and brutal inequality, the contrast is jarring. The heirs of Sam Walton, Walmart's notoriously frugal founder, are amassing wealth on a near-unprecedented scale — and they're hardly alone. The Walton fortune has swelled by \$39 billion, to \$191 billion, since topping the June 2018 ranking of the world's richest families.

Other American dynasties are close behind in terms of the assets they've accrued. The Mars family, of candy fame, added \$37 billion, bringing its fortune to \$127 billion. The Kochs, the industrialists-cum-political-power-players, tacked on \$26 billion, to \$125 billion.

So it goes around the globe. America's richest 0.1% today control more wealth than at any time since 1929, but their counterparts in Asia and Europe are gaining too. Worldwide, the 25 richest families now control almost \$1.4 trillion in wealth, up 24% from last year.

To some critics, such figures are evidence that capitalism needs fixing. Inequality has become an explosive political issue, from Paris to Seattle to Hong Kong. But how to shrink the growing gap between the rich and the poor?

As the tension increases, even some billionaire heirs are backing steps such as wealth taxes. *"If we don't do something like this, what are we doing, just hoarding this wealth in a country that's falling apart at the seams?"* Liesel Pritzker Simmons, whose family ranks 17th on the Bloomberg list, said in June. *"That's not the America we want to live in."*

A notable addition this year: the Saudi royal family. The House of Saud is worth \$100 billion, based on the cumulative payouts royal family members are estimated to have received over the past 50 years from the Royal Diwan, the executive office of the king. That's a lowball figure. After all, oil giant Saudi Aramco, the linchpin of the Saudi economy, is the world's most profitable company. The kingdom is hoping to take it public at a \$2 trillion valuation.

Tallying dynastic dollars isn't an exact science. Fortunes backed by decades and sometimes centuries of assets and dividends can obfuscate the true extent of a family's holdings. The net worth of the Rothschilds or Rockefellers, for instance, is too diffuse to value. Clans whose wealth is currently unverifiable are also absent. But of those we can track, most are reaping the rewards of ultra-low interest rates, tax cuts, deregulation and innovation.

Other big gainers include the owners of fashion house Chanel and Italy's Ferrero family, whose brands include Nutella spread and Tic Tac mints. In India, the fortune of the Ambani family swelled \$7 billion, to \$50 billion.

**In all, the world's 25 richest families have \$250 billion more wealth, compared to last year.**

The rich aren't necessarily getting richer together. The Quandt family dropped eight places following a poor year for Bayerische Motoren Werke AG, which has battled trade tensions and slowing global markets as BMW invests in the disruptive shift to self-driving electric vehicles.

And this could in many ways represent a peak, as U.S. President Donald Trump escalates a trade war with China and worries grow about a global recession.

*(Courtesy: Bloombergquint, August 10, 2019)*



## **AIDWA Condemns Khattar and Other BJP Leaders for their Despicable Remarks about Kashmiri Women**

The All India Democratic Women's Association condemns the statement made by the Chief Minister of Haryana, M.L. Khattar that "*people nowadays have started saying the route to Kashmir is cleared and now we will bring girls from Kashmir*" for marriage. Not only is this statement in itself despicable, what is even more distressing is that it was made at an event connected to the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** campaign in the State. Vijay Goel, another BJP Rajya Sabha MP, hung up a poster outside his house with a photo of a Kashmiri girl, with the comment that there is now a smile on her face because Article 370 has gone.

This is not the first statement made by BJP leaders targeting and objectifying Kashmiri women after the illegal and unconstitutional abrogation of Article 370. For example Vikram Saini, a BJP MLA from U.P said in a public meeting right after the abrogation that bachelors, in particular, were very happy because they could now get 'gori' Kashmiri girls and buy land in the Dal lake. This naked display of patriarchal aggression went viral, thus promoting a volley of sickening statements against Kashmiri women. The Sangh Parivar is using the situation to excite public sentiment against the targeted Muslim minorities, particularly through attacks on the women of these communities.

The earlier statement by a woman leader of the BJP women's wing calling for the rape of Muslim women to teach the community a lesson, the open defense by BJP leaders and lawyers of the rapists and murderers in the Kathua case, and the deafening silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah in all these cases including the current disgraceful statements about Kashmiri women, are all clear pointers to the reactionary, patriarchal, communal and Manuvadi mindset of the RSS-BJP.

The AIDWA demands strong action against Haryana Chief Minister M.L. Khattar and other legislators/ministers/office bearers of the BJP in different states for their shameful anti-women statements.

The AIDWA urges all democratic forces and women's organisations to unitedly oppose and expose the nefarious designs of the BJP government in Jammu & Kashmir.

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# CITU Appeal for Flood Relief



The monsoon rains this year have wreaked havoc in as many as 12 states in India. Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Assam, Odisha, Uttarakhand and some eastern parts of India have faced heavy floods. Assam and Bihar which have been facing heavy floods since the first spell of monsoon have again got affected in the current floods. Northern India, especially the Himalayan states, is also facing heavy landslides and floods. Over two hundred people have lost their lives in the floods and lakhs of people have been evacuated to safe places.

The General Council of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) held at Hassan, Karnataka, gave a call for immediate flood relief activities. The operative part of the resolution is given below.

The General Council of Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) held at Hassan, Karnataka, deeply mourns the heavy death toll due to the floods triggered by the incessant monsoon rain in the South, West and North of India.

While deeply condoling the deaths, the General Council of CITU expresses its unflinching solidarity with the affected people and requests the Central and respective State Governments to speed up the rescue and relief operations on a war-footing.

In addition to this the CITU General Council demands that Government of India must immediately release emergency relief funds and dispatch necessary rescue teams and materials to the flood affected areas.

CITU calls upon all its members in the concerned states and the working class in general, to plunge into these relief operations to save the affected people and to ensure maximum possible relief measures including financial help, at the earliest.

Contributions for flood relief can be sent directly to the CITU state committees of the affected states.



