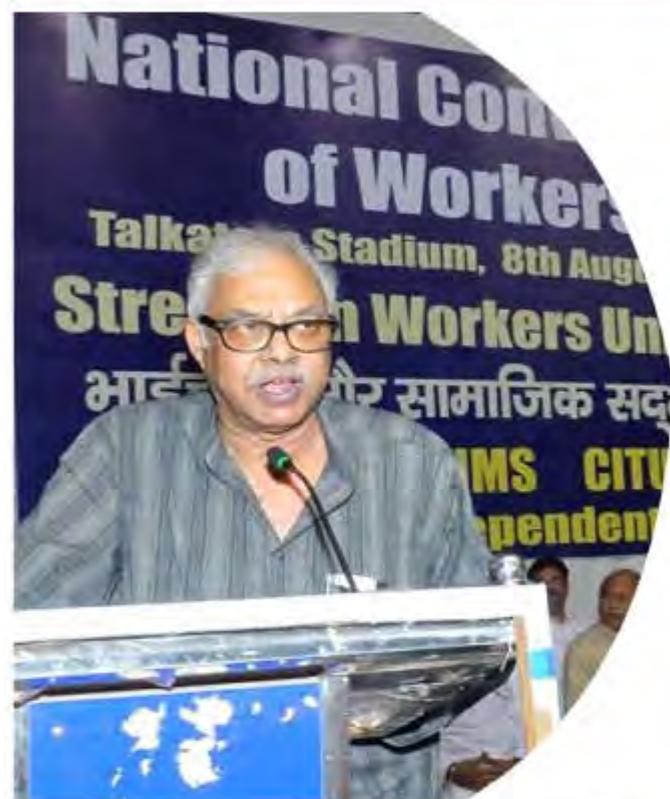


# The Voice of the Working Woman



## **WORKERS** to **STORM DELHI**

**9,10,11 November 2017**

**Central Trade Unions Call for**

## **PADAV**



# National Workshop on Right to Food, Health, Education and Care

17<sup>th</sup> September 2017

CITU will hold a National Workshop on 'Right to Food, Health, Education and Care' and the Role of Centrally Sponsored Schemes on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2017 in New Delhi. Around 400 representatives of AIFAWH, MDMWFI, AICCAW will attend the workshop.

## National Convention of Mass Organisations

18 September 2017

A National Convention of Mass Organisations will be held on 18 September 2017 in New Delhi.

## National Meeting on Specific issues of Dalits and Municipal Workers

19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017

A National level meeting to discuss the specific issues of Dalits will be held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2017 in New Delhi. Activists of unions having a large number of Dalits; State level leaders of CITU affiliated unions among municipal sweepers, safai karmacharis, scavengers etc and One office bearer of CITU state committee who guides/ will be guiding these unions will participate

A national level meeting to share information/develop coordination between our unions working among municipal workers and other urban and rural local body employees will be held in Delhi on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

## MASSIVE THREE DAYS' PADAV

9, 10 and 11 November 2017

National convention of Workers organized on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2017 at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi has given a call for

- Block/District/Industrial Centres/State level massive campaign, mobilisation and conventions in September – October 2017 in preparation to central mobilization
- Massive THREE DAYS PADAV ('Ghera Dalo – Dera Dalo') at the national capital on 9, 10 and 11 November 2017

To be followed by Indefinite strike

### *The Voice of the Working Woman*

*Monthly Journal of the AICCAW(CITU)*

#### Editorial Board

**Editor** K Hemalata

**Working Editor** Ranjana Nirula

**Members** A R Sindhu  
Sunanda Bhattacharya, Aruna

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# Seventy Years of Independence

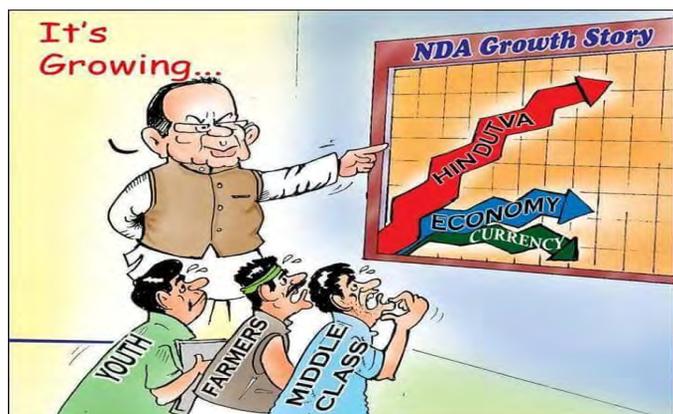
Seventy years have passed since India attained independence from British colonial rule. The common people - men and women, workers, peasants and all other sections, who made immense sacrifices in the freedom struggle, dreamed of an Independent India free from hunger and unemployment; an Independent India where all its citizens irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, region or gender, lead a life of dignity with equal rights and opportunities; of an Independent India that would foster progressive and scientific outlook for all round advance and development of its people; of a sovereign, secular democratic India.

But the path that the rulers chose for the country after independence failed their vision. With the advent of neoliberal policies the hard won rights of the people came under attack. Inequalities increased as never before. Blatant use of money and muscle power makes a mockery of elections. Big capitalists and business people dominate the Parliament and state legislatures. Governments now openly function to protect and increase their profits. Seventy years after Independence, large sections of our people, particularly dalits, adivasis, minorities and women, remain excluded discriminated and marginalised.

This situation has worsened since the BJP, which had no role in the independence movement, came to power on its own strength three years ago. Committed as it is to the neoliberal policies on the one hand and Hindutva communalism on the other, the BJP led government is subverting all State institutions, including Parliament, to push forth its disastrous agenda, displaying authoritarian tendencies. Ironically, a government which brands all its opponents as 'anti national' has undermined the country's independence and sovereignty by converting India into a junior partner of US imperialism. It has jeopardised our national security by its decision to hand over defence PSUs to big multinational corporations, domestic and foreign. It has decided to privatise the public sector banks and insurance companies, railways etc against the interests of the common people.

It is in this background, just a week ahead of completing seventy years of independence, that the central trade unions held the massive national joint trade union convention to chalk out a concrete programme to intensify the struggle against the neoliberal policies. The overwhelming response of workers across the country to the convention and its calls was proof of their determination to fight back these policies of the BJP led government.

The campaign, for the unprecedented three days' massive 'padav' near Parliament, is an occasion to make the entire working class aware of the '*link between their day to day issues and the policies of the government and expose the politics that drive these policies*'. This is an occasion to remind the workers and all sections of the toiling people about the vision of our forefathers



(Courtesy: Internet)

when they fought for Independence from British colonialism and mobilise them to continue the struggle to realise that vision of a really independent, democratic, sovereign, secular self reliant India; an occasion to involve all sections of working people in fighting the clutches of US imperialism and international finance dictated neoliberal policies. United struggles of the people, decisively defeating the divisive machinations of RSS and its outfits, can certainly achieve this.

# Kerala Announces Labour Policy

## Minimum Wage to be Rs 600 per day

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) government of Kerala has announced its Draft Labour Policy. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in a statement that the policy seeks to ensure the welfare and social security of workers along with the comprehensive development of Kerala's economy and society.

**Wages:** Kerala is the state with the highest wage rates in India, owing primarily to workers in most sectors being organised into trade unions. Unlike most other states where minimum wage laws remain merely on paper, most workers in Kerala earn more than the minimum wage.

The State's new labour policy seeks to raise minimum wages to Rs. 600 per day. Apart from ensuring minimum wages in all branches of work which fall under the Minimum Wages Act, at least a basic wage will be ensured in the branches of work which do not fall under the Act. 'Fair wages' will be implemented in sectors where there are possibilities of ensuring higher remuneration. A revenue recovery system would be implemented in order to recover wage arrears, if any, from the employers. Appropriate legislation will be brought in to regulate the work and pay conditions of teaching and non-teaching staff in un-aided educational institutions which currently do not benefit from the protection of labour laws.

**Social Security:** Kerala is the state in India with the most wide-ranging set of social security schemes for workers. The new labour policy aims to strengthen the various Workers' Welfare Fund Boards in the State. The welfare schemes would be revamped in a manner such that administrative costs are reduced and benefits such as health and housing are ensured.

**Industrial Relations and Collective Bargaining:** The work of Industrial Relations Committees would be extended to sectors such as agriculture, Information Technology and fish processing which do not have such committees currently.

A labour bank will be created for the protection and job security of domestic workers.

The Recognition of Trade Union Act (2010) will be strictly implemented in all sectors in order to strengthen collective bargaining and to make it transparent.

**Unorganised Sector and Enforcement of Labour Laws:** The labour policy aims to strengthen and reinvigorate the work of the Labour Department's Enforcement section to improve the work and pay conditions of unorganised workers in shops and commercial establishments.

Labour-friendly enterprises will be identified on the basis of the evaluation of the Labour Intelligence Cell, which is to be newly established.

**Women-friendly Workplaces:** The policy says that steps will be taken to ensure gender equality and to create woman-friendly environment in workplaces. Maternity benefits and facilities for breastfeeding children in workplaces will be ensured. Maternity leave will be ensured with pay, as per the provisions of the Maternity Benefit Act.

Crèche facilities will be set up wherever possible, with the help of the Social Justice Department. A crèche cess will be introduced. Arrangements to ensure the periodic maintenance of crèche facilities will be made compulsory.

The policy says that the government will intervene to ensure overtime allowance, weekly off, break time, and arrangements for accommodation and transport for women workers, depending on the nature of the enterprises.

Toilets and rooms for workers to take rest will be made compulsory as per labour law.

Seating arrangements for workers will be made compulsory. This assumes significance especially because instances of workers not being allowed to sit during work have come to light in recent years. The women workers of Kalyan Silks, a major chain of textile showrooms in Kerala, had gone on strike in 2014-15 to win the right to sit during working hours.

The policy says that the Kerala Industrial Establishments (National and Festival Holidays) Act will be amended to ensure that workers in all establishments get days off on four national holidays and on polling days for general elections.

**Migrant Workers:** Some of the most noteworthy provisions of the labour policy relate to the LDF government's approach towards migrant workers in the State. Kerala had launched India's first welfare scheme for migrant workers in 2010, and recently it has earned widespread praise for Awaz, the new health insurance scheme for migrant workers. The new labour policy seeks to extend these advances further.

Language-wise details of workers from other States who work in Kerala will be collected, and volunteers with knowledge of the respective languages will be deputed to communicate with the workers.

Facilitation centres will be set up in various parts of the State where workers from other States can access information about their rights, various welfare schemes, rail and road transport facilities, government services etc.

The Apna Ghar scheme to provide livable accommodation facilities for migrant workers from other States would be extended all over Kerala.

Mobile app will be used to set up a facility to find unregistered workers and to get them to register for the Health Insurance Scheme.

**Plantation Workers:** Improving the living conditions of plantation workers in Kerala was one of the major promises of the LDF during its election campaign in 2016, especially in districts such as Wayanad with a high percentage of farmers and agricultural workers in the plantation sector.

The new labour policy promises to implement a scheme to improve the quality of garden hospitals and group hospitals for plantation workers, as well as the educational facilities for plantation workers' children. Workers' quarters in plantations will be renovated.

Comprehensive Health Insurance coverage will be ensured for plantation workers' families.

A scheme will be implemented so that plantation workers who do not have houses of their own can have their own houses. Those who don't have land and housing will be provided with the same, and steps will be taken to improve wages and other benefits.

**Traditional Industries:** Workers in many traditional industries have for long been faced with the problem of not getting work throughout the year. The labour policy seeks to explore all possibilities of increasing the number of working days in such industries. The Labour Department will formulate schemes as necessary, with the cooperation of other departments.

A scheme will be formulated in association with the Industries Department, for the sustenance of traditional industries and for the renovation of industries which are in crisis.

The Income Support Scheme for workers in traditional industries will be revamped and implemented. Traditional industries will be modernised suitably and productivity shall be improved in accordance with changes in technology and production processes.

**Employees' State Insurance:** The Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Scheme will be expanded. ESI Dispensaries and Hospitals will be renovated. New ESI dispensaries will be started in places where they do not exist.

Steps will be taken to get ISO certification for the 9 ESI Hospitals in the state. ESI Hospitals in Feroke (Kozhikode district) and Thottada (Kannur district) would be upgraded to the status of Super Speciality Hospitals.

**Skill Development:** The Mid-Day Meal Scheme will be extended to all Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in stages. Smart Class Room, Virtual Class Room and other new technologies will be used to raise ITIs to international standards.

Special skill development programmes will be implemented for women and those belonging to deprived communities.

Ensuring job security, decent remuneration and social security for workers in all sectors is the overarching objective that the LDF government has set for itself while announcing the Draft Labour Policy.

# **Workers' Padav in the National Capital in November**

The joint national convention of central trade unions and independent industrial federations held in Talkatora Stadium in the national capital on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2017 chalked out a programme of joint campaign and struggles against the anti worker and anti people policies and the growing authoritarian tendencies of the Modi led BJP government at the centre.

The national convention unanimously decided to organise a massive three days' 'padav' near Parliament on 9-11 November 2017. It called upon the working class of the country to prepare itself for countrywide indefinite general strike in the future. The 'padav' will be preceded by extensive joint campaign through state, district, block, industrial centre, factory level joint conventions.

The huge participation of workers from all over the country – from far off Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south to the strife torn state like Jammu and Kashmir in the north, from all sectors, organised and unorganised, public and private - shows the determination of the working class of the country to fight against the attacks on their livelihoods and working conditions by the BJP led government wedded to the neoliberal agenda. The Talkatora Stadium was overflowing with workers sitting on the floor and standing packed in the passages. Despite this almost half the workers had to remain outside the hall.

The joint convention was organised by all the central trade unions except the BMS which has opted out of joint struggles since the BJP came to power at the centre, and almost all the independent national federations of different sections of employees. In addition to INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, UTUC and LPF, the independent national federations and unions of employees in the central government, state government, insurance, banks, defence, railways, BSNL, electricity, coal, steel, energy, petroleum, road transport, air transport, water transport, port and dock, mining, IT, PSUs etc participated in the convention.

The convention strongly condemned the authoritarian action of the government in depriving the INTUC representation in the tripartite and bipartite forums and committees including in the international forums. It denounced the measure as a heinous onslaught on the rights of the entire trade union movement. It declared that the trade union movement in the country will not take it lying down. It pledged to fight back with all its might.

The Declaration placed by G Sanjeeva Reddy, president of INTUC, was adopted unanimously by the convention amidst thunderous slogans after representatives of the ten central trade unions spoke in support of it. The speakers included Amarjeet Kaur from AITUC, Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, general secretary of HMS, Tapan Sen, general secretary of CITU, Sankar Saha, general secretary of AIUTUC, Manali Shah from SEWA, Rajiv Dimri, general secretary of AICCTU, Shanmugam, general secretary of LPF and NK Premachandran from UTUC.

Speaking on behalf of CITU, Tapan Sen exposed the myth of government's claims of providing social security for all through its Code on Social Security. He said that this would in reality snatch away whatever social security benefits a small section of organised sector workers are getting today. The real intention was to utilise the huge corpus of funds running into lakhs of crores of rupees lying with the existing social security funds like the EPF, ESI, Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess etc and make them available to the share market. The government would not contribute a single paisa towards social security as per this Code.

Tapan Sen also noted the rising struggles of the peasants in different parts of the country and emphasised the need to develop joint struggles of workers along with peasants and other toiling masses. He said that a strong movement of workers and peasants will be invincible and will definitely succeed in defeating the anti people policies of the government. He also urged the working class to be vigilant against the divisive forces and protect and strengthen its unity.

The convention was presided over by a presidium comprising Ashok Singh (INTUC), Ramendra Kumar (AITUC), SN Pathak (HMS), Hemalata (CITU), Satyavan Singh (AIUTUC), Lata (SEWA), Uday Bhat (AICCTU), Satrujit Singh (UTUC) and V Subbaraman (LPF)

# NATIONAL CONVENTION OF WORKERS

8<sup>th</sup> August 2017, Talkatora Indoor Stadium, New Delhi

## DECLARATION

The National Convention of Workers being held today, the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2017, in Talkatora Indoor Stadium, New Delhi jointly called by the ten Central Trade Unions, in association with all independent National Federations of Workers and Employees of both Industrial and Service sectors, expresses serious concern over the deteriorating situation in the national economy due to the pro-corporate, anti-national and anti-people policies pursued by the Narendra Modi Government, grievously impacting the livelihood of the working people across the country.

The Convention notes with utter dismay that the Government has been continuing to arrogantly ignore the 12 point Charter of Demands on minimum wage, social security, workers' status and pay and facilities for the scheme workers, against privatization and mass scale contractorisation etc. being jointly pursued by the entire trade union movement of the country. Despite numerous nationwide joint strike actions, the most prominent being those of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015 and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2016, participated in by crores of workers against the policies of the Government, the ruling regime at the centre has been increasing onslaught on the rights and livelihood of the working people of the country. Both the organized as well as unorganized sectors are victims alike.

The National Convention unanimously condemns in strongest terms the conspiratorial and authoritarian attack of the BJP government to deprive the biggest central trade union in the country, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) from all representation in the tripartite and bipartite forums and committees including in the international forums. This is nothing but a severe and heinous onslaught on the rights of the entire trade union movement. It will be unitedly fought back and the national convention pledges for that.

Unemployment situation is getting aggravated with employment generation practically turned negative even in the most labour intensive sectors. The phenomenon of closure and shut-down of industries and the forecast of huge job-loss in the IT sector is adding fuel to the fire. Price-rise of essential commodities including public transport, electricity, medicines etc is mounting pressure on daily life of the people in general, leading to widening as well as deepening impoverishment. Hasty implementation of GST has added fuel to fire. Drastic cut in Government expenditure in social sector and various welfare schemes has made the conditions of workers, particularly those in unorganized sector, more precarious.

The anti-labour authoritarian character of the Government is all the more evident in their refusal to implement even the consensus recommendations (in which the Government was also a party) of the successive Indian Labour Conferences in respect of equal pay and benefits for equal work for the contract workers, formulation of minimum wage on the norms agreed by 15<sup>th</sup> ILC/Supreme Court Judgment and workers status for the scheme workers viz., Anganwadi, Mid-Day-Meal and ASHA etc. Shockingly, the Modi Government is even refusing to implement the recent Judgments of the Supreme Court of the country on the most genuine issue of "equal wage and benefits for same work" and on EPS, 1995 on contribution and calculation of pension on actual pay and dearness allowance.

Despite opposition of all the trade unions in the country irrespective of affiliations, the Government has been aggressively pushing through its programme of pro-employer and utterly anti-worker labour law reforms which are aimed at imposing the condition of slavery on the working people.

The latest onslaught is the move to evolve a 'Social Security Code' by dismantling and demolishing the existing statutory Social Security infrastructure under Employees Provident Fund Organization, Coal Mines Provident Fund and Employees State Insurance Corporation and many others welfare statutes, abolition of welfare related cess, and usurp the huge social security fund subscribed by the workers amounting to more than Rs.20 lakh crore and make them available for the speculation in share market under the most deceptive and fraudulent camouflage of 'universalisation of social security'.

Privatization of all strategic PSUs, including Defence production, Public Sector Banks and Insurance and also Railways, public road transport, oil, power etc through disinvestment, strategic sale, outsourcing in favour of private sector, promoting 100 per cent FDI in many vital and strategic sectors are increasing day by day. Moreover stripping all the cash rich PSUs from the investible cash reserves are added assaults. In fact the Defence Sector privatization move is actually designed to destroy manufacturing capability and Research initiatives developed by the country over the last six and a half decades. The worst and most dubious is the game plan to outsource more than 50 per cent products including weapons and critical equipments, so far being produced by the Ordinance establishments. Complete privatization of the Railways, step by step, is going on. Operating private trains in the existing tracks built by Railways is being permitted. Moreover free access to railway yards, sheds and workshops for maintenance of private coaches, wagons and engines etc are being offered to private operators. Already 23 railway stations in all metro cities have been shortlisted for privatisation. Railway employees will be the worst victims of privatization in terms of job security, democratic trade union rights and protection of achievements in the areas of pay, perks, social security etc. Like Central Electricity Regulatory Authority (CERC), a Railway Development Authority (RDA) has been created. Given the sky-rocketing increase in electricity tariff by CERC, under RDA railway fare and goods freight is poised to be hiked, hurting the common people and benefiting the private profiteers.

Public sector Banks are under attack through various legislative and executive measures. The ultimate target of the Government is privatization and to extend undue favour to the same private corporate crooks, whose default of paying back the loan has put the banking sector in severe difficulties. The retrenchment of contractual employees has been resorted to already in some banks. Insurance sector is also under such attack. Legislative measures to pave the way of privatization of our major ports are also in the advanced stage. CPSUs even including the core and strategic sectors like Energy, Petroleum, Telecom, Metal, Mining, Machine Building, Road, Air and Water Transport, Port & Dock and more are under the privatization onslaught of the Government. The Convention notes that workers of these industries are fighting sectoral battles unitedly. United struggles have been launched by the workers and employees of Government Services Sector including the Scheme Workers as a whole. The Convention extends full support to these struggles.

Attempts are being made by the state governments to dismantle Public sector road transport by issuing route-permits to private parties. The central government intends to get the new Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill 2017 passed hastily in the current session of parliament which will allow wholesale privatisation of road transport. The convention, while taking note of the protest action by transport workers, condemns the state governments and central government's anti people and anti worker moves in the transport sector.

The National Convention of Workers extends full solidarity to the fighting farmers in various states as well as under the Joint National Forums of Peasants' Organizations. It is the same set

of pro-corporate, pro-landlord policies which have created a severe crisis in agriculture, biggest livelihood provider in the economy leading to continuing increase in spite of suicides.

This National Convention of Workers records its strong denunciation against the communal and divisive machinations on the society being carried on with the active patronage of the government machinery under the present polity. The peace loving secular people in the country are facing a stark situation of terror and insecurity all around. Communal forces are cultivating an atmosphere of conflicts within the society on non-issues. It is disrupting the unity of the workers and the toiling people in general, so vital to carry forward the ongoing struggles based on our 12-point Charter of Demands as detailed above. Working class must raise their strong voice of protest.

The situation before the nation is the deepening all round attack on the rights and livelihood of the working class and the toiling people in general by the private corporate friendly government of the day. On the other hand the working class has achieved solid unity of the trade union movement and also achieved unprecedented response in the ongoing struggles including the strike actions opposing such suicidal anti-people policies.

The task before the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions and independent national federations is to further intensify the surging struggles in various sectors through a concerted united agitation and mobilization at national level to be followed by countrywide general strike action as a culmination and consolidation of all sectoral struggles. The National Convention of workers therefore adopts the following programmes:

1. To work for achieving and accelerating united struggles in all the sectors of the economy on respective demands, which has already begun
2. To Organize Block/District/Industrial Centres/State level massive campaign, mobilisation and convention in preparation for central mobilization to be followed
3. Massive three days dharna at National Capital on 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> November to be attended by lakhs of workers from all over the country.
4. The National Convention calls upon the working people to prepare for indefinite countrywide strike action against the anti people, anti national activities of the government.

The National Convention calls upon working people across the sectors and throughout the country, irrespective of affiliations, to make the above programmes a total success.

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## ASHA Workers Conference in Srinagar



The Second Conference of the ASHA Workers Union, Kashmir was held on 21 July in Srinagar, presided over by Nazia. Despite the bandh call on the day before the conference, 275 delegates from 9 different blocks of Kashmir region participated in the conference.

Inaugurating the conference, Sham Prasad Kesar, senior leader of CITU demanded that ASHA workers be regularized as health workers. He also demanded social security benefits, pension and maternity benefits for them

Ranjana Nirula, convener of the All India Coordination Committee of ASHA Workers (CITU), said the government must acknowledge the crucial contribution of ASHA workers in the NHM and in improving the health status of the poor. Strong unions of ASHAs through their struggles have been able to win fixed monthly payments and increase in incentives in several states. In Kerala the LDF government has raised the monthly payment to Rs 7500. She urged the ASHA workers to unite with other workers and oppose all government attempts to divide them and the people on religious lines.

State CITU President Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami urged the government to provide a dignified monthly wage to ASHA workers who are the backbone of the health structure in the rural areas. The practice of paying poor compensation for extreme hard work to the women working in different sectors in J&K must end. CITU State General Secretary Om Prakash addressed the conference.

CITU leaders Om Prakash and Abdul Rashid Najar demanded payment of all incentives on time, implementation of the Central Government order for monthly payment of Rs 1000, provision of changing rooms, ID cards, two uniforms, BPL cards and promotion as ANMs after training. Rifath Ara, General Secretary ASHA Workers' Union Kashmir, placed the report of the activities and struggles of the union for the workers' demands. After discussion, the report was adopted unanimously. The conference passed resolutions demanding implementation of the Minimum Wages Act, Social Security benefits and women empowerment.

The conference elected a committee comprising of 15 members with Misra Ji as President, Rifath Ara as General Secretary and Gulshan Ara as Treasurer of the Union.

*(Report from Abdul Rashid Najar, Joint Secretary, CITU)*

## Asha Workers Conference in Jammu

On 20th July, 2017, the one day conference of the ASHA Workers Union, Jammu (CITU) held Jammu gave a call to organise ASHA Workers and struggle for their demands like increase in wages to Rs.7500 p.m. as in Kerala state, implementation of the recommendations of 45th Indian Labour Conference, including recognition of ASHA as workers, minimum wages of Rs 18,000 per month, coverage under social security schemes like ESI, EPF & pension, and to resist the anti worker policies of the government in the state. Delegates from different blocks of Jammu region participated in the conference. The conference was presided over by a presidium comprising of Anita Devi, Sunita Bhagat and Geeta Devi.

Sham Parsad Kesar, senior leader of CITU State Committee, in his inaugural speech said that since the AICCAW was formed in February 2009, ASHA workers have been struggling and agitating for regularization as health workers, for minimum wages and better working conditions. But in J&K ASHA workers are suffering due to the negative attitude of the Health department, with even a number of genuine payments and incentives under various



schemes not being paid to them. Despite funds lying unutilized

In addition to their own assignments ASHAs have to perform many other tasks which take more than 8 hours a day but they are not paid any wages for these extra tasks. In fact, the incentives are so low that ASHAs get only between Rs. 500 to 1000 per month, whereas the majority belong to BPL families. He said that they should be regularized as health workers and be paid the statutory minimum wages of the state. He urged the new regional committee to be elected by the conference to organise all the ASHA workers and intensify the struggle till their demands are conceded.

Sunita Bhagat, General Secretary of ASHA Workers' Union, placed a detailed report of past activities and struggles, for a stop to privatization of the public health services, and for better conditions of work. 17 delegates took part in the discussion on the report.

A regional secretariat of ASHA Workers union comprising of 15 members and a 32 member working committee was elected unanimously by the conference.

The conference also passed resolutions on minimum wages, social security, women empowerment and against communalism.

## Midday Meal Workers March in Assam



The Mid Day Meal workers of Assam, under the leadership of CITU, organised a March to the Raj Bhawan ( Governor's House) at Guwahati on 28th July 2017. Around 7 thousand workers from 17 districts participated, despite floods in various parts of Assam. Their demands were for the State Government to pay an extra honorarium of Rs. 5000 per month and for a stop to any move of privatisation of the Mid Day Meal Scheme.

## Tamil Nadu Workshop of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers



Tamilnadu Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Association conducted a two day state level workshop for cadre development. The work shop was held at Kumili , Kerala on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017. The workshop was attended by 88 participants from 29 districts, including state office bearers. The Inaugural session was presided over by Angammal.

President. G.Sukumaran General Secretary CITU, took the class on "Present political situation and the current tasks". In the afternoon session Malathi Chittibabu, State Treasurer, spoke "On Organisation" followed by a group discussion.

R.Karumalaiyan Asst. General Secretary, CITU dealt with " Problem and Prospects of Unionization of Anganwadi workers of Tamilnadu". On 30 July in the morning session T.Daisy spoke on the " On Immediate Tasks". CITU All India President K.Hemalatha, in her concluding address touched upon the issues of the anganwadi workers and helpers and the links with the class policies and the politics of the ruling class and how to overcome these challenges.

The president of CITU Theni district. Murugan; Murugeswari, state leader of Anganwadi union along with the Theni district anganwadi office bearers and Kumili CITU leaders had made full efforts to conduct the workshop in an organized manner. *(Report from R.Karumalaiyan)*

## ICEU Women's Convention in Tirunelveli

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Divisional convention of women sub-committee of ICEU, Tirunelveli Division was held on 8 July at Palayamkottal, attended by 120 comrades, including 22 men. Women Subcommittee convenor S Hemalatha presented the report, and 8 women participated in the discussion on it. The General Secretary, C Muthukumaraswamy, while summing up the discussion , informed that Class III employees have been given representation in the Sexual Harassment complaints committee in Tirunelveli Division.

M Girija, Joint Secretary AIIEA, in her special address explained the present political situation and the increasing violence and attacks on women and children. She stressed the importance of strengthening AIIEA by active participation in all its activities.

16 resolutions were passed in the convention.

M Thilagam was elected as Convenor and A Chellameena, M Kavitha, S Hemalatha, U Sumitha, M Ramani and K Kohilal as Joint Convenors.



# Where are the Jobs, Modi ji?

Savera

Narendra Modi himself, and all his associates in the government, had promised the people of India that tackling unemployment by creating jobs will be the biggest priority of their government. They had promised that their much tom-tommed programs like 'Make in India', 'Skill India', 'Startup India' and others would resolve the joblessness that haunts India and would set the country on the path of prosperity. Modi had in fact justified his kowtowing to foreign investors by saying that their investments will create jobs.

Now, three years down the line, all this has vanished into thin air. Modi, Jaitley, et al are no longer talking about creating jobs. All the schemes are forgotten. They are just concentrating on winning elections and thinking up new tricks to fool the people like removing red lights from VIP cars or visiting temples to pray. Meanwhile people across the country are wondering – what happened to all the promises of jobs?

In the whole of last year, just 2.3 lakh jobs were added in eight key non-farm sectors of the economy according to a recent government report. These eight sectors are manufacturing, construction, trade, transport, accommodation and restaurants, IT/BPO, education and health. All together, they employ over 2 crore workers. So, the addition of new jobs amounts to a mere 1.1% of the total.

Women's jobs are continuing to remain limited. The 5<sup>th</sup> Employment-Unemployment Report of the Labour Bureau had recorded that there was nearly 9% unemployment rate among women. Only 22% of women were participating in remunerative work because of lack of job opportunities.

In the QES report series it has again been confirmed that women's job creation is languishing with just one lakh jobs added in the past year, that too mostly in very low paying sectors like education and health, where government funded jobs means full time work for part time or voluntary wages as is the case with ASHA/USHA and anganwadi workers/helpers.

<b>No opportunities for women's employment</b>	
	<b>Work participation (%)</b>
Total	22
Rural	25
Urban	14
Unemployment (%)	8.7

*Source: 5th EU Survey, Labour Bureau*

## Informal Sector

About a quarter of India's labour force, some 11 crore people, are working in 6.3 crore non-farm enterprises that can broadly be described as the informal sector, according to the latest NSSO report for 2015-16. None of these enterprises are covered under the Companies Act or Factories Act. In fact more than two thirds are unregistered. Put together they add Rs.11.5 lakh cr worth to the country's output.

Over 84% of these enterprises are family run with no hired workers. Trade activities, mainly small shops, make up about 36% of these enterprises but manufacturing and other services are nearly as popular. Nearly 20% are owned by women, which is because women's employment opportunities are very low, their work participation rate being just 23% in India. So, they lend a hand in adding to family income by running petty shops and other enterprises like tea shops etc.

<b>Informal sector - No jobs</b>		
	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>Change since 2010-11</b>
Enterprises	6.3 crore	10%
Women owned enterprises	20%	
Total Workers	11.1 crore	3%
Gross Value Added	Rs.11.5 lakh crore	83%
<i>Source: NSSO</i>		

Comparison with a similar report in 2010-11 shows that while the number of enterprises has increased by 57 lakh or about 10% but strikingly, the number of workers has increased by only 33 lakh or just 3% in these five years. That's a net addition of about 6.5 lakh workers every year. This reflects the stagnating employment scenario in the country. Meanwhile, the gross value added has increased by 83% in this period.

It is noteworthy that in the same period gross value added per worker has jumped up by 78%. This means that despite lesser number of workers being added, such is the squeeze of exploitative conditions that more value is being extracted from them, that is, workers are working more. Meanwhile, earnings of workers have also increased by 86% in five years, largely due to inflation which averaged about 7-8% per year in these five years. An average worker in these enterprises earns just Rs.7000 per month.

These enterprises, otherwise classified as micro-, small-, cottage etc., were thought of by many as a great hope for providing mass employment and efficient resource utilization, but they don't seem to be in great health, going by this report. Their job creation capacity is floundering, the scale of their economics is almost subsistence level and in any case they are concentrated in urban areas and in a handful of states. While slow demand is the main reason for this, lack of credit facilities, technology and skills are other factors experts believe are contributing to the lack lustre performance.

### **Job losses continue**

Diverse sectors of the Indian economy are losing jobs on a massive scale. The high profile \$150 billion IT industry is projected to throw out 2 lakh employees per year for the next three years. This is in part because of global issues including difficulty in US IT contracts, rise of new technologies etc. and also because of an oversupply of IT graduates in India and over hiring as cheap labour by Indian IT companies. Other sectors linked to the international market including mining, steel etc. continue to suffer because of the global slowdown and with no real end in sight.

Meanwhile, in a bizarre turn of events, Modi sarkar's divisive and communal politics has itself contributed to a severe crisis in one of the most labour intensive and flourishing sectors in India – the leather industry. Because of open encouragement to cow vigilantes, who have attacked and lynched dozens of Muslim and dalit leather workers, cattle traders and others associated with the industry, the supply of hides and skins has been badly affected leading to a dip in leather production and employment. It is estimated that the whole leather sector employs about 20 lakh people, most of whom are small and very poor flayers and collectors of hides and skins in rural areas.

Agriculture no longer absorbs as many labourers as previously and with farmers on the streets agitating against unremunerative prices, millions of agricultural labourers and small or marginal farmers too are facing dire job prospects.

## MGNREGS

Reports from the rural job guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) indicate that unemployment continues unabated and in fact it seems to be worsening. In Modi's first year as Prime Minister, 4.65 crore households demanded work in the scheme. Next year, in 2015-16, this number had increased 15% to reach 5.35 crore. Then, in 2016-17, it further increased by 6% to reach a staggering 5.69 crore households in search of work.

Even as the demand for low paying work in MGNREGS increases, 10-11% of applicants are not given jobs. According to government data, last year nearly 58 lakh households that wanted work in the scheme were turned back.

## Imbalanced Job Growth

As per the latest report, increase in new jobs is not only very slow but also that it is highly imbalanced. For instance almost half of the 2.1 lakh new jobs added are in two sectors – education and health which together added 1.1 lakh new jobs.

Growth in manufacturing jobs is recorded as being just short of 1%, and that too because of a sudden increase in the last quarter of 2016. This in itself is highly suspect because it was in this period that the disastrous demonetization was imposed on the country, with consequent job losses.

The manufacturing sector is the backbone of the non-farm economy and employs nearly half of the workers in the selected eight sectors. A mere one percent growth is virtually nothing for this massive sector. This is despite the fact that it was the target of attention by the Modi government through its 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' programs, as also of efforts to woo foreign direct investment. It is clear that all this has failed spectacularly.

The failure of the Indian capitalist class to invest more in manufacturing, coupled with reluctance of foreign capital to invest in productive work in India, means that not only are new jobs not being created but existing ones are being cut on a country-wide scale. This is leading to a worsening of the job situation, forget about improvement. Several recent reports by industry analysts indicate that IT, telecom and the banking & financial services sectors which have been the main job creators in recent years are now getting rid of their workforce. One report says that these three sectors will throw out at least 10 lakh employees in the coming 12-18 months because of a slowing economy, mergers among telecom giants and automation. Many of the startups – much applauded by Modi – are folding up or demanding more concessions to survive. Even foreign analysts, who otherwise do not tire of praising Modi, are worried about the lack of job growth. Over 30% of youth aged 15-29 in India are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), according to a recent report by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an organization of advanced capitalist countries. This is more than double the OECD average of 14.6% and almost three times that of China (11.2%).

Although the government has been patting itself on the back for the projected high GDP growth rate for India, the nuts and bolts of the economy are all in deep freeze. This is why there is no growth in jobs.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) released monthly by the government confirms this dire situation with a rise of a mere one percent between January 2015 and January 2017.

According to latest data from the Reserve Bank of India, the same period saw gross bank credit to industries increasing by a mere 0.3%. This includes credit disbursements to micro, small, medium and large industries and together makes up nearly 40% of all non-food credit. The meager increase in credit to industry is a symptom of the flagging growth in manufacturing which is also reflected in lack of jobs growth.

# Government Evading Comprehensive Legislation for Domestic Workers

Kiran Moghe

It is indeed ironical that just a day after the ILO facilitated a National Stakeholders Meeting on a proposed National Policy for Domestic Workers for the Government of India at New Delhi on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, the incidents of violence and repression in Noida happened after the news spread that a domestic worker had been wrongfully confined by her employer in a posh apartment complex. It was all the more ironical because the Director General of Labour Welfare (DGLW) who introduced the Policy seemed rather apologetic about the exercise, pointing out that “*some people were of the opinion that our country was not ready to adopt a policy for domestic workers because of the feudal mindset that still existed in our society.*” This “*feudal mindset*” was equally evident in the interventions made by a member of the Domestic Workers Sector Skill Council (DWSSC) who told the gathering that part of the skill training involved “*training domestic workers to be polite and submissive*”, a remark that invited a chorus of protest from the Trade Union representatives who were present at the meeting.

It was therefore not surprising that the representatives of domestic workers' unions from different parts of the country, including Central Trade Unions such as CITU, AITUC, INTUC, BMS, HMS and SEWA, as well as constituents of the National Platform for Domestic Workers came down heavily on the present Government for dragging its feet on adopting a comprehensive legislation to regulate the working conditions of domestic workers in the country, and provide them social security benefits. With one voice, they told the government representatives that there had been enough debate on a Policy, and simultaneous discussion was needed to pass new laws or amend existing labour laws to ensure that the objectives of the proposed policy would be actually implemented in order to benefit the workers.

The fact of the matter is that successive governments led by both the Congress and the BJP have been unwilling to introduce effective legal measures to end the exploitation of domestic workers, who continue to work for long hours at poor wages and without any social security including job security. In June 2011, the ILO passed a historic Convention 189 titled Decent Work for Domestic Workers. Historic, because for the first time, there is an international covenant that puts a highly informal section of the workforce on par with other categories of workers and provides a framework for protective measures for them. Although India supported the Convention, 6 years down the line, it is yet to ratify it.

*This is what the present Labour Minister Bandaru Dattatreya said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha in March 2015 - “In India we ratify an ILO Convention only when the national laws and practices are brought fully into conformity with the provisions of the Convention in question. Since the national laws and practices are not in conformity with the provisions of the convention, India has not yet ratified the ILO Convention No. 189.”*

It is well known that ratification of the Convention is itself a commitment to put in place policies and laws that will facilitate the implementation of its objectives! The Government is actually playing a double game with domestic workers, announcing intentions to better their working conditions but actually doing nothing at the ground level to do so. The latest draft National Policy for Domestic Workers is nothing but a rehash of an earlier draft that was published in 2011, flowing out of the recommendations of an Interministerial Task Force that was set up in 2009

when the ILO initiated discussions on C189. In fact many Central TUs, including CITU, were kept out of these earlier deliberations.

The current Draft suffers from many of the earlier weaknesses, including the basic definition of domestic workers. Participants pointed out the nature of paid domestic work *within* the household, and the fact that it is mostly done by women renders it different from other types of paid domestic service categories such as drivers and gardeners, etc.



The nomenclature of “Part Time”

and “Full Time” domestic workers fails to recognise the fact that the working day of many of them extends to more than 12 hours, only because they are so poorly paid that they have to work in several households in order to earn enough to make ends meet. Domestic work should not be considered as “unskilled” work.

It was strongly felt that there should be a national floor minimum wage for domestic workers, which would put pressure on the state governments to follow suit and include them in their minimum wage schedules. There was severe opposition to the provision to pay the workers “in kind”.

There is a need to register not just the domestic workers, but also the employers and include them in the regulatory framework. Along with protective measures for overseas migrant domestic workers, interstate migrant and anti-trafficking laws should also include domestic workers.

Participants from those states where Welfare Boards have been set up, such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, etc asked for a comprehensive review of their performances, and for independent sources of funding (such as a cess on property taxes in urban areas) if welfare schemes were to be substantive in nature. Dispute redressal mechanisms need to be clearly spelt out. The class bias against domestic workers in existing training modules was pointed out. Most importantly, the policy does not address the various discriminatory practices faced by domestic workers, including caste and religious discrimination that is rampant in Indian households.

The question of how the Policy is to be located in the attempt by the Modi government to do away with most labour laws and collapse all social security measures into a single Code without provision for fund or guarantee for benefits was also raised by the CITU representative Kiran Moghe, with a demand that the particularity of domestic work and the diversity of other types of employment should be respected and maintained in order to provide sector specific protective measures.

These are issues that have been raised time and again by organisations of domestic workers all over the country. But as the veteran leader Ruth Manorama remarked sharply, *it is indeed the mindset of the ruling politicians and the bureaucrats that poses a hurdle for crores of domestic workers who have become conscious of their rights in the last few years.*

Challenging this mindset requires painstaking organisation of domestic workers so that they can be mobilised to launch militant struggles for their rights. Trade unions need to further intensify their efforts in this direction.

# Fight Privatisation! Save Public Sector

Hemalata

One of the major components of neoliberal policies, popularly known as 'LPG (liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation) policies' is privatisation – privatisation of public enterprises, public resources and public services etc. Privatisation process in our country was initiated under the Congress regime in 1991 when the neoliberal policies were officially introduced. Attempts to privatise the public sector undertakings, hand over control and management of public resources to private players, cut down government expenditure on public services like health, education etc, leaving people at the mercy of private players have been going on since then. However this has gained momentum since the BJP came to power at the centre with its own majority in 2014.

In his election campaign before the last parliament elections, Modi promised to end the 'policy paralysis' of the Manmohan Singh led Congress regime. His government is putting this into practice by fast tracking privatisation and dismantling the public sector.

## Privatisation on Fast Track

In his budget speech for 2017-18 Arun Jaitley announced that the government intends to raise Rs 72,500 crore through disinvestment of PSUs in this financial year. Out of this Rs 46,500 is to be raised through disinvestment, Rs 15,000 crores through strategic sale and Rs 11,000 crores through disinvestment of the general insurance companies. The government has appointed Reliance Mutual Fund Managers to provide consultancy and execute its project of quick selling of 10 CPSUs strategic to our national economy including ONGC, GAIL, Oil India Limited, Indian Oil Corporation, Coal India Limited, BHEL, Bharat Electronics Limited, etc through the Exchange Traded Fund (ETF).

Almost all the profit making public sector companies, most of them in the strategic and core sectors of the economy, are targeted for privatisation by the government. At the same time, the government has targeted several sick and loss making PSUs with huge assets for outright sale or complete closure if it does not get any buyer. Many of these were in fact deliberately made to become sick by the successive governments. Even today these can be made profitable by infusing the necessary capital. The huge assets that they have can be utilised for this purpose. But the government is not willing to do that.

The former BJP government led by Atal Behari Vajpayee introduced the concept of strategic sale of public sector and privatised premier public sector units like Modern Food, Hindustan Zinc, BALCO, Indian Petrochemicals Corporation (IPCL), VSNL, Paradip Phosphates, CMC, HTL, Jessop, Centaur Hotel etc which were sold at throw away prices. The present BJP led government dismantled the Planning Commission and set up the NITI Ayog soon after coming to power. One of the major tasks assigned to the NITI Ayog is privatisation of the public sector. It has already identified 74 CPSUs including 26 for downright closure and 10 for strategic disinvestment. In the last three years, the government has stripped most of the profit making PSUs of all their reserves and surpluses. This was done deliberately to lower their market value for the benefit of the prospective buyers from the private corporate sector.

CPSUs in various sectors including defence, steel, power, general insurance, drugs and pharmaceuticals, aviation, heavy engineering and construction etc are targeted for privatisation. Defence production units like the Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) and the special steel plants of Steel Authority of India (SAIL) – Alloy Steel Plant in Durgapur, Visweswaraiyah Iron and Steel Plant in Bhardavati and the Salem Steel Plant, are among those identified for strategic sale. The defence ministry has also ordered to immediately list other defence PSUs viz., BDL and MIDHANI in the stock market to facilitate disinvestment of at least 25 per cent shares. Bridge & Roof Company Ltd, a premier Miniratna PSU in strategic heavy engineering cum construction

sector is also being processed for outright privatisation. The government has decided to sell Air India and is looking for buyers. The Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL) and Rajasthan Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (RDPL) would be closed. Hindustan Antibiotics Limited (HAL) and Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceuticals Limited (BCPL) will be privatised, if buyers are available; otherwise they will also be closed down.

The aggressive privatisation drives in the defence sector and in the railways are of serious concern. In the recent period, every day the corporate media has been running stories about the huge burden that Air India has become to the national exchequer. Editorials are written on why it should be gotten rid of. The finance minister himself has taken the initiative to argue for its outright sale. The fact is that the huge accumulated loss of Air India, which was a profit making company till 2007, was the result of the bungling and misgovernance by successive governments at the centre. Now, when Air India got an operating profit covering up over Rs 2,636 crore of operating loss previous year, the government has decided to hand it over to the private sector by offering to write off debt of Rs 30,000 crore. Had the same magnanimity been shown to the public sector carrier, it could have eliminated its accumulated losses substantially. This clearly shows that privatisation of Air India is not to save public money as is being claimed by the BJP government. It

182 products out of the total 273 products being produced by the public sector ordinance factories are being taken away from them to be produced in the private sector. The government has already started issuing licences to the private players. Thus the public sector ordinance factories are being deliberately pushed into low capacity utilisation and inevitable closure. 7 out of the 41 ordinance factories will have no work now and 14 more will become redundant by around 50 per cent of their capacity. Jobs of around 50,000 of the total 1.10 lakh workers will be under threat. Besides, the small arms manufacturing public sector ordinance factories are being directed to enter into public private partnership (PPP) arrangements that will allow the chosen private players to utilise the infrastructure of the ordinance factories set up with public funds. What is significant here is the public sector ordinance factories never failed to deliver the requirements of our army, navy and air force and have always been strictly complying with the quality requirements. The government tried this experiment of outsourcing the production of items like uniforms, mosquito nets, shoes etc to private players and found that they were neither able to deliver the products on time nor were they able to ensure quality. As a result the production of these items had to be brought back to the public sector ordinance factories. But the government does not want to learn any lessons from this in its eagerness to serve its corporate masters.

Not only the small armaments, high value products like combat aircraft, helicopters, submarines and other critical equipment, which were all produced by the defence PSUs, are now being offered to private corporate sector by the BJP government on nomination basis. Reliance Infrastructure has entered into partnership with Dassault Aviation of France to supply Rafale fighter jets. Tata and Lockheed of USA will partly produce F 16 fighter jets. The public sector Hindustan Aeronautics will be pushed to die a natural death. Thus the entire defence production infrastructure, built up by the country during the last over six and half decades, is set to be dismantled in favour of the private corporate sector which has neither the exposure nor competence and expertise to produce these items. The foreign armament and equipment industry would ultimately dominate the defence production scenario of our country. Our security preparedness will be totally dependent on these foreign armament industries. The BJP government wants to hide such anti-nationalist acts behind its chanting of nationalistic slogans and its false sympathy for our soldiers guarding our borders.

is nothing but frittering away national assets for the benefit of private airlines, domestic and foreign. This is another example of the BJP's brand on 'nationalism'.

### **Life Insurance Companies and the Banks**

The general life insurance companies and the banks were nationalised to protect the interests as well as savings of the people from the loot of private establishments. The financial resources at their disposal were used for national development and to serve the common people, particularly the poor people in remote rural areas. No private bank or insurance company will be interested to serve these areas. The LIC has been contributing for infrastructure development, drinking water projects etc. The role of our public sector financial institutions in protecting our economy during the 2008 global financial meltdown is now well acknowledged.

Now the government wants to dismantle our public sector banks and insurance companies by privatising them, not for the benefit of the common people, but to benefit the big national and international finance companies. It has decided that 25 per cent shares in all the five public sector general insurance companies will be sold to private companies, both Indian and foreign. The public sector banks today have loan defaults amounting to several lakh crores rupees. 88.4 per cent of the banks' NPA are from large corporate borrowers; out of this 12 per cent NPA are from 12 large corporates. Instead of taking stringent measures to recover these loans, the government is leading them towards closure under the garb of insolvency and bankruptcy code 2016. This is deliberately done to pave the way for their privatisation.

The public sector in our country was instrumental in creating the industrial base of the country after independence. It was the public sector enterprises that built the major industrial infrastructure of the country like power, transport including railways, roads etc when the private sector did not have the capacity or was not willing to take the risk of investing the necessary huge amounts of capital in these sectors which do not provide immediate profits. Thermal, hydro and nuclear power projects, transport and communication, production of steel, defence equipment, ship building, oil, coal etc were set up in the public sector. The research and development taken up by the PSUs made a huge contribution to our technological and industrial advance. It also played an important role in developing balanced regional growth.

The townships constructed in the areas where the PSUs were located, many in remote underdeveloped rural areas, not only provided housing and other facilities for the workers like schools, hospitals, dispensaries, community centres, shopping complexes etc but also led to overall development of the entire area. Thousands of people in the surrounding villages benefited indirectly by getting employment and income opportunities by providing different services to the people in these townships. By implementing the reservations for SC/ST sections, PSUs provided employment and opportunities for development of these sections. In essence, the public sector has helped in industrialisation, contributed to economic growth including growth of private sector in the surrounding areas, and contributed, despite limitations, to social justice.

Privatisation of PSUs is not merely an onslaught against public sector workers. Dismantling the public sector means handing over our national assets, our national wealth to the corporates, domestic and foreign, on a silver platter. It is an attack on the basic fabric of our national economy; it is an attack on our self reliance, our country's manufacturing capability. It is an instrument of transferring huge national assets to private hands, domestic and foreign. It is an attack on the entire people, an onslaught on SC/STs right to reservation in jobs. It is an attack on the entire society. Hence struggle against privatisation cannot be considered the responsibility of public sector workers only and left to them alone. All sections of people have to be involved in this struggle against privatisation and to save the public sector.

# Impact of Marxist Ideology on Indian Trade Union Movement

A.K. Padmanabhan

The impact of Marxian ideology and that of the Great October Revolution on humanity is well recorded. It is also irrefutable that both had deep reflections on National liberation movements during 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

As far as India is concerned, despite all out efforts to depict the Indian freedom movement as that with a single stream, the fact that the left and Socialist stream had played a major role, could not be covered up. In this, the impact of Marxian ideology as well as that of the October Revolution on the Trade Union movement in our country is very important.

The modern working class movement is a product of the Industrial Revolution. The characteristic of this was the appearance of the two basic classes – the owners of the factories and the means of production and the exploited wage labourers who do not own any means of production. The social changes that happened after the emergences of these distinct classes, brought forth the contradictions between these two classes. It has been noted by many scholars that *'the triumph of the machine over man became synonymous with the insatiable greed of the Capitalists for maximum profits'*. And this resulted in the increase in working hours and intensified exploitation.

In England, where the Industrial Revolution had its centre, the trade unions came into existence as early as 1752. Sporadic actions earlier got intensified. All the existing regulations by the rulers were actually against the interests of the workers. There were new rules and regulations directly forbidding the workers coming together to demand justice.

As Sukomal Sen notes in 'Working Class of India –' *Since the introduction of machinery, the machine – the instrument of labour - appeared to the workmen as the material embodiment of Capital. It was therefore hardly surprising that the workers immediate reaction was to destroy the machine.*" Sen quotes Marx to depict the changes later when workers could find their real target of attack in place of illusory one. ***"It took both time and experience before the working people learnt to distinguish between machinery and its employment by capital, and to direct their attacks, not against the material instruments of production, but against the mode in which they are used"***.

From this point, how the trade unions fought against the ruling classes and how the political and social developments forced the capitalist classes to concede certain demands etc. are all well depicted parts of history.

*Various types of organizations sprang up in England at this juncture. One prominent organization among them was Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trade Union. Sukomal Sen notes - "Although Owen never thought in terms of class struggle, in reality, increasing trade unions activity provoked determined attack by State and vigorous counter-measures by entrepreneurs. This culminated in the collapse of Grand National Union and quick decline of Owen's influence"*.

It was in this phase that British workers built up a untied movement with a six point charter which was mainly political demands including universal suffrage at 21 years of age. This movement, the Great Chartist movement, could not attain the demands but 'it radicalized the entire working class of England'. In the later period workers in England could realise, at least

partly, same of the demands. A law enacted in 1847 limited the working day to ten hours for women and child labour. In effect, even men could get 10 hours working day in certain cases. Sukomal Sen quotes Marx ***“The English factory workers were champions, not only of the English, but of the modern working class generally, as their theorists were the first to throw down the gauntlet to the theory of capital”***. It is evident from this quote that the working class in England had developed into a position of challenging the capitalist class in England.

The importance of the Chartist movement and the gains in the later years were noted by Lenin also – *‘England was giving the world the first broad, truly mass and politically clear cut proletarian revolutionary movement’*.

Till the development of scientific socialism by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, there were various types of movements of Utopian Socialism and also various trends in trade union activities. *‘The practical development of trade unions in the nineteenth century took place in the context of a running battle between the working class and the new governing classes including legislature and judiciary’*.

In the background of strikes and struggles in various parts of Europe, the efforts to build up International Solidarity became fruitful in the year 1864, when, on 28 September 1864, the first meeting of representatives of the working class of different countries was held in London. Besides the English and French many other groups were represented. Karl Marx was there and he was elected as one of the German members in the Central Committee.

*‘In drafting the Statutes, and formulating political programme Marx was able to establish his view. The Communist Manifesto was published in 1848 and the political and social theories of Marx had been concretized. It was a splendid achievement for Marx having been able to incorporate these theories in the programme of the Association although in a limited form’*.

Sukomal Sen concludes his notes on the emergence of this first international – “Marx’s draft for the statutes and Address of the International was accepted unanimously with only minor amendments. The address ended with the great historic slogan of The Communist Manifesto, ‘Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!’

The preamble to the constitution of the Association came out to be one of the historic documents of the Europeans working-class movement. Its ringing declaration:

*That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the ablation of all class rule;.....*

*That the economic emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means;.....*

*That the emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists; ..... is to be recorded in history as an infallible guide to action for the working classes the world over for all time to come.*

The modern working class movement assumed full form and marched forward through many contradictions, innumerable groupings and regroupings. It began vibrating the world. Emergence of the Indian working class movement is an inseparable part of this world phenomenon.

### **Indian Working Class Movement**

It is in this background that we have to assess the development of the Indian Working class movement.

*“Modern Indian Working Class first germinated in the construction of Railways in India. Hundreds of workers who were engaged in the Railway building were the harbingers of, modern Indian working class”.*

In India, the colonial rulers destroyed traditional handicrafts and cottage industries. But it did not result in development of modern industry as we witnessed in Europe. It was the introduction of railways and later the growth of certain industries that helped these workers to get some jobs. Earlier they were all forced to get some rural jobs for their living. All these took generations to fructify.

The situation in India and other colonies has been analysed by the Communist International as given, below:

***“The Working Class in the colonies and semi-colonies has characteristic features which are important in the formation of an independent working-class movement and proletarian class ideology in these countries. The greater part of the colonial proletariat comes from the pauperized village, with which the worker retains his connection even when engaged in industry. In the majority of colonies (with the exception of some large industrial towns such as Sanghai, Bombay & Calcutta et.) we find, as a general rule, only the first generation of a proletariat engaged in large-scale production. The rest is made of ruined artisans driven from the dying handicrafts, which are widespread even in the most advanced colonies. The ruined artisan, the small property owner, carries with him into the working class the narrow craft-sentiments and ideology through which national reformist influence can penetrate the colonial labour movement”.***

This basic character, as Sukomal Sen points out, was taken advantage of by the reformist leadership of the Indian bourgeoisie, during the initial period of the Indian labour movement.

By the period of First World War, the Indian working class had built up local level organizations, conducted struggles, and even massive strikes.

The sufferings due to the exorbitant prices of all essential commodities and the economic crisis resulting from destructive war, further intensified the agitation.

By the time the war ended, the situation became more critical. In every part of the country, almost in every sector, there were strikes with massive participation. Workers could get wage increase and certain other benefits also through these struggles. In certain cases, workers were forced to withdraw their struggles, without any settlement. In Bombay (Mumbai now) there was an unprecedented strike of more than 2 lakh workers, out of which 1.25 lakhs were textile workers. The strike which began on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1920 continued up to 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Workers from 80 out of the 85 textile mills participated in this strike. Repeated strikes in that period included those in Railway, Port and Docks, Engineering workshop, Oil installations, Government Mint, Press, Tramways, Gas and Electricity supply, Municipal workers etc. All the industrial centres in the country reported about such strikes. These reports show that the strikes which began in 1917, gradually increased every year and by 1920, turned into massive actions.

The British government was very worried about the developments in India. From London the Secretary of State for India telegraphically asked the viceroy to send a report on the industrial unrest.

The report submitted by the Viceroy in 1920 stated – “There is undoubtedly a considerable amount of Industrial unrest in India”. It also said that the causes are primarily economic and listed the following reasons – *The pressure of high prices, even after ‘considerable’ increase in wages, not uniformly, and not having kept pace with prices; Profiteering by the traders; knowledge*

*about very large profits being made by capitalists, mill owners in particular, the contrast between comfort and wealth of few and the comparative poverty of workers; the reluctance of employers to grant increase of pay till the discontent manifested in the shape of strike’.*

The reasons being given by the colonial rulers to their superiors are really of great importance to understand the intensity of the situation.

Then the report says – *“Apart from these economic causes there is in the air a sort of epidemic strike-fever partly engendered by worldwide political unrest, partly fostered by frequent reports of labour trouble in England and Europe”.*

This report also notes that *“there are inchoate organizations nursed by politicians”*, and also talks about certain news papers like Bombay Chronicle encouraging the strikers and then it says – *“Much hope is based by such papers on the All India Trade Union Congress which meets in Bombay at the end of this month and will, it is said, be followed by Special Railway Conference”.*

Sukomal Sen sums up the situation – *“The report confirms the advancement of the Indian labour movement during the period, especially after the war and betrays a deep anxiety which the movement caused to the colonial rulers. The internal economic situation and the national political movement of India having been pointed out as the two basic factors giving rise to these labour struggles, the report does not fail to recognize the great inspiration which these movements drew from the world-wide political unrest and the European and English labour movement of that period. Although, the official report did not spell out the ‘world-wide political unrest’, there is hardly any difficulty to realize what it really meant. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the phenomenon of world-wide labour awakening that followed were the obvious implications. The real impact of these historic events on Indian labour did not escape the political insight of the shrew imperialist government”.*

Thought the workers were on strike and in struggles, the leadership was with ‘petty bourgeois’ intellectuals. It was the outlook of these leaders that influenced the workers. As Rajani Palme Dutt, the famous British Communist leader, noted *“There was not yet any political movement on the basis of Socialism, of the conceptions of the working class and class struggle”.*

It was this above said influence that changed from 1920; when the socialist ideas came onto the political horizon in India.

Sukomal Sen sums it up with the following observations – *“Having imbibed the idea of scientific socialism and getting inspired for action by the victorious Russian Revolution, a small group of young Indian intellectuals entered the labour scene in the 1920’s and boldly endeavoured to channelize the workers’ movement in a different direction, the direction of sharpening class struggle and bringing class political consciousness into the labour movement. This marked a qualitatively new stage in the evolution of leadership of the Indian labour movement and set in motion a new dynamism, the struggle between the forces of revolution and reformism with far-reaching historical significance.”*

This struggle between the forces of revolution and reformism continued in the trade union movement in the country and within the first central trade union also for a long time.

In this Centenary Year of Great October Revolution and 200<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Karl Marx, the cadres of the class oriented trade union movement in the country have to pledge themselves to continue this struggle, by imbibing the Socialist principles put forward to us by our great teachers.

*(This article is written fully on the basis of the Two important books written by Comrade Sukomal Sen, Veteran Trade Union leader and historian – All the Quotations used are also excerpted from his books. (1) International Working Class Movement (2) Working Class of India.)*

# Dilution of Section 498A

Section 498A IPC was one of a series of laws which recognized the oppression women face in their own homes in our country. It recognised the serious and pervasive nature of gross domestic violence and seeks to stop this by punishing those who commit this crime. The Section was inserted in the IPC after a sustained struggle by women's organizations to do justice to women. Several National Women's Organisations and groups have written a letter to the Supreme Court to lodge their protest and to ask for a review of the judgment concerning Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code in the matter of Ramesh Kumar v. State, in which the Court has directed the Police only to act in cases in which "tangible physical injuries" and "death" takes place. The letter has not been considered by the judgment though 498A IPC expressly covers both mental and physical violence. The judgment therefore dilutes the provisions of law relating to cruelty under Section 498A IPC. This is an error that the Court must correct.

Apart from this, the Supreme Court has given a series of directions, ostensibly to stop the misuse. It has directed the District Legal Services Authority to constitute Family Welfare Committees in every district of the country comprising of three civil society members to look into and report on all complaints of Section 498A, barring those where tangible physical violence or death has taken place. This committee has to first give a report on the case and only then can the police and court act.

The letter argues that a Preliminary Enquiry is always conducted by the Police prior to the registration of an FIR in a case under 498A IPC. Furthermore, the mandate of the Crime Against Women Cell is to first intervene by way of mediation, and a period of 90 days is already provided for in this regard. The Family Welfare Committees are not competent to undertake investigation and report on cognizable criminal offences. The direction of the Court, therefore, is both manifestly unjust and unfeasible in accordance with settled principles of criminal law.

The letter expressed its dismay that the entire judgment proceeds on the basis that women are liars and file false cases under Section 498A IPC not only against their husbands, but also against the husband's family members. It completely overlooks the fact that women are daily recipients of harassment for dowry and of domestic violence, which are perpetrated by the husband and by his family, particularly in cases of dowry harassment.

The National Family Health Survey data has shown that around one out of every 3 women are victims of mental, physical and verbal domestic violence. Other studies have also shown that domestic violence is the most pervasive kind of violence against women and deeply affects their health and wellbeing. NCRB data of 2015 itself shows that 1,13,403 cases of violence under Section 498A IPC were filed in that year, of which Charge sheets were filed in 89.4% of cases. The observation of the court is that a "large" number of cases being filed under Section 498A IPC. are filed in the heat of the moment over trivial issues. The first two NCRB statistics from 2005 and 2009 show that the Police has found a small percentage of the cases to be false on account of "mistake of law or on facts". These percentages show that in an overwhelming majority of cases, a prima facie case of gross domestic violence has been found and charge sheets have been filed. The court's argument of low conviction rates of 14.4% in 2012 and 15.6% in 2013 does not hold ground as it does not indicate whether cases are false. In many cases, investigation is not properly conducted, statements of material witnesses are omitted, and evidence is improperly collected. Furthermore, as much domestic violence occurs in the confines of home and family, convictions under Section 498A IPC are notoriously difficult to achieve. The basic premise on which the judgment was based was therefore wrong.

In fact, it is a constant complaint of victims that the police are insensitive and gender biased, often minimizing the extent of assaults. Most women victims find it extremely difficult to even lodge a complaint.

## Building the Nation in India's Villages- Under-paid Public Workers

Smita Gupta



As I write, roughly 47 lakh workers return home as the sun sets on 7.3 lakh worksites across the length and breadth of this vast country under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. About 23% are Scheduled Castes, and 17% are Scheduled Tribes. The over 50 % women amongst them get no rest as they rush to light their kitchen fire and do domestic chores at the end of the day of back-breaking work, but with the satisfaction that no one will sleep hungry.

I wait for 19 year old Kamta Devi in Alwar to return with her two children and husband from the worksite where a tank was under construction. *"Sorry we are late, behenji. We had to put in three extra hours because we had not finished our gaddha. There were rocks after 3 feet of digging but the mate insisted we complete the full 6 feet or face a wage cut"*. She quickly throws some water on her face, hands and feet and joins me, talking as she breastfeeds her infant son. *"I couldn't afford to take too much time to feed him at the site since the earth was really hard and I had to carry several headloads of earth from the bottom of the tank to the bund to complete the task. My husband Ramu too is really exhausted because he had to dig out big, heavy stones and load them on my head."* *"Even though we worked 11 hours we won't earn the minimum wage today"*, adds Ramu.

As Kamta hands me a cup of tea, I see that her hands are blistered and bleeding from the arduous work she does and must be really painful. There was no medicine kit at the worksite reports Ramu. She is more worried, however, that now her biometrics will not match and she will not get her wages. *"As it is we have not been paid for 5 months"*, she says. *"Now these blisters may make things worse"*.

Kamta explained that the earth works are done in pairs, with the men digging and the women filling, carrying and throwing the earth. As the depth of the tank increases, the climb and distance for the women increases. They are paid according to the total outturn and the rate for the women's work does not add up to a day's wage. They remain invisible in the schedule of rates, as "lift and lead", and underpaid in the muster rolls. *"I carry 300-400 kgs of earth on my head every day, walking about 8 to 10 kilometers, and yet I never earn more than half the minimum wage. Even this wage is paid months later. How do I light the kitchen fire?"*.

*"Earlier, in the drought relief works the names of women workers were not even added to the muster rolls. At least now after the Rozgar guarantee our names are added in the muster rolls but we are not paid full wages since our work is not recognized"*. I was a bit confused, because

if they were listed as workers, why was their work not included? Ramu explained that the reason was simple – workers were not paid for their time but for digging and removing the earth. So the removing work is subsumed under the digging!

Men are mostly forced to migrate to construction sites and the like since the work available under NREGA is far below the promised 100 days. The women who remain form *jodis* and are unable to produce as much outturn as with the male diggers. Despite the fact that during June, July and August the digging is mostly done by women, the work norms are not revised. The wage rate then collapses, and to push it up adolescent girls and boys miss school to add to the outturn. Thus, the NREGA worksites often have a lot of illegal and uncounted child labourers. “At least I have a job card. My sister has to work without one and the mate only gives her half a wage since the remaining goes to the person whose proxy she is.”

## Massive Demonstration of Scheme Workers in Maharashtra

More than 7000 scheme workers participated in a daylong Dharna demonstration at Azad Maidan Mumbai in Maharashtra on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2017, during the monsoon session of the Assembly.

Earlier on 11<sup>th</sup> July, all the CITU affiliated trade unions of all scheme workers had come together and formed a co-ordination committee for scheme workers with Saleem Patel as its convener and decided to hold a joint action programme on 3<sup>rd</sup> August. Since Anganwadi workers had had their joint action programme along with the other



unions on 25<sup>th</sup> July they undertook for token participation in this dharna. The demonstration began at 11 am with thunderous slogan shouting, asserting the demands of the different sections of scheme workers.

Usha Rani, national secretary of CITU, Mohd Shaikh, Vijay Gabhane, Hirabai Ghonge, Safiya Khan, Sajeda Begam, Netradeepa Patil and others addressed the mass gathering. The meeting continued up to 3 pm. but the delegation was not invited by the concerned Ministers for discussion.

In spite of repeated attempts the Ministers refused to meet the delegation. Exasperated, the women agitators left the Azad Maidan, broke the barricades and blocked the roads in front of BMC Mumbai. Due to such pressure, the police had to arrange a meeting with the ministers. J.P.Gavit (CPIM MLA) met the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and held a discussion on scheme workers demands. The Anganwadi delegation held discussion with Miss. Pankaja Mundhe, Child and Women Welfare Minister. Maharashtra ASHA Gataparvartak Federation delegation met Mr. Deepak Sawant, Health Minister. The Health Minister assured the delegation to start the honorarium and increase in activity linked incentives from March 2018 with necessary budgetary provisions. He also assured to look after the issues of Bonus to all ASHA workers and gataparvartaks.

J.P.Gavit and D.L.Karad reported the discussion to the gathering and gave a call to ensure participation in the ASHA workers Chalo Delhi March on 21<sup>st</sup> August and to organise a demonstration at the residence of the Finance Minister during Diwali.

*(Report from Saleem Patel)*

# 70 Years of Independence



## Fighting for Real Independence

**- Health and Nutrition - Secularism - Democracy  
- Worker, Peasant, Women, Dalit Rights**



Una



Gorakhpur



### Tripura: CPI(M) CM's Independence Day Speech Censored by DD, AIR

DD and AIR's decision to censor Tripura CM Manik Sarkar's speech on Independence Day is unprecedented. This amounts to the Centre imposing 'undeclared emergency' in the country. The CM was asked to revise certain portions of his speech, which was not aired, when he did not do this.