



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

ENSURE VICTORY OF LEFT FRONT



**Against Exploitation
and Deprivation**



**And
For People's Alternative**



CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen during an Election Rally in Tripura

(Report Page 5)

Comrade N. M. Sundaram

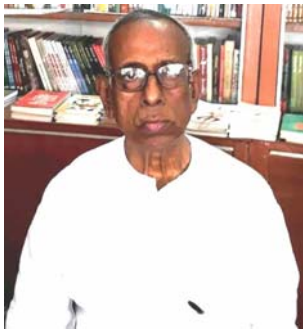


CITU national secretariat meeting, held on 26-27 December in New Delhi, expressed its grief on the passing away of Comrade N. M. Sundaram, a veteran leader of Indian trade union movement especially of insurance workers, on 26 December, 2017 in Chennai. He was 80.

Comrade Sundaram led All India Insurance Employees Association (AIIEA) in various capacities, as its General Secretary for 16 years and President for 6 years. He played major role in the struggle of the Indian working people against privatization and other disastrous impacts of neoliberal economic policies. He was a prolific writer and orator and had written articles and books on various aspects of neoliberal economic policies.

CITU paid homage to Comrade Sundaram and conveyed condolences to the bereaved family members and to the comrades of AIIEA.

Comrade Ajit Sarkar



CITU expressed its shock and grief at the demise of Comrade Ajit Sarkar, the veteran leader of the working class movement in North Bengal, in a hospital at Siliguri on 9 January at the age of 73.

Comrade Ajit Sarkar was one of the pioneers in organizing the tea garden workers mainly in the hills of Darjeeling district and also in other parts of North Bengal. He was the undisputed and beloved leader of the tea garden workers of Darjeeling. He led numerous struggles of the tea plantation workers for decades. He played a frontline role in uniting the tea-plantation workers' movement in the state bringing the trade unions of almost all affiliations in the united platform of struggle.

Comrade Ajit Sarkar also played important role in building trade union movement and CITU in Darjeeling district. He played leading role in the working class movement of West Bengal braving all repression and attacks. He was a member of CITU Working Committee for decades till 2016 and was a founder office bearer of All India Plantation Workers' Federation of CITU.

Com Ajit Sarkar joined the communist movement in his early youth and was a Secretariat Member of Darjeeling district committee of CPI(M) till his demise.

CITU Secretariat conveyed heartfelt condolence the bereaved family members and his comrades in the movement and paid respectful homage to the memory of the departed leader.

Comrade Shanti Ranjan Bal

Comrade Shanti Ranjan Bal, a legendary leader of bank employees movement breathed his last on 21 January at the age of 87 years after brief ailment and hospitalization. His body was donated for medical research.

Comrade S. R. Bal led UCO bank employees as their general secretary or president for over three decades since 1958 and was the founder leader of BEFI and helped in the formation of UFBU. Com Bal was a member of CPI (M) till his demise.

The Two

Contrasting Realities

The people of India are facing two contrasting realities. One, that the prime minister Narendra Modi is in Davos attending the World Economic Forum (WEF) to present India's agenda of 'ease of doing business' and for 'red carpet' (in PM's language) invitation to the foreign corporates. And the other reality is the death of 17 labourers in Industrial Area of Bawana in the heart of National Capital Territory of Delhi.

For this 'red carpet' welcome of the foreign corporates, the prime minister as well as the union finance minister have been displaying in various international forums, including Davos, three major steps in economic area that the BJP-led government has taken during end-2016 to end-2017 for rapid transition of informal economy to formal economy in India. These are (1) demonetisation and digitalisation of money transaction; (2) GST and (3) Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI) Bill, 2017 – all prescribed by the international finance capital. That is why the World Bank and the IMF are pampering Modi government in their forecast of global economy despite India's position rapidly sliding down in all areas of human development and unemployment as per reports of United Nation agencies including ILO.

In his Davos speech Modi proudly claimed about 'ending inspection and license raj' in India – an off repeated adage of BJP governments. Precisely because of the industrial units, without licenses, and absence of inspections by the concerned labour authorities are leading to large number of workers Bawana like deaths across the country. Modi government proposed 4 labour codes to subsume and alter 44 existing labour laws for 'ease of doing business' – one of these is already in the Parliament. The 'Code on Safety' is the last in the series. BJP-led central as well as several state governments, first being Rajasthan, brought several state amendments of labour laws for 'ease of doing business' for

the capitalists. None has safety coverage for the workers' lives and livelihood.

United labour movement in India is rich in content and form. Yet, these contrasting issues are not reaching to the workers at grass root. Without working class of India rising up conscious of the issues, India's peasantry and other toiling sections can not be mobilised for the democratic alternative. CITU was born for this purpose. It has to take up these issues to the workers, mobilise all other toiling sections and go forward with united working class movement in action.

WORKING CLASS

FEBRUARY 2018
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CITU Condemns Attack on Dalits in Maharashtra

CITU condemned the attack by Hindutva forces on the Dalits while they were observing the bicentenary of the battle of Bhima Koregaon near Pune in Maharashtra on 1 January. One person was killed, 25 vehicles were torched and over 50 vehicles were damaged by the attackers. Media reports and available video footages show people with saffron flags and shirts attacking people with blue flags and vehicles with blue signs. It was an organised and planned attack.

CITU congratulated the people of Maharashtra for condemning this barbaric act of the Hindutva brigade and for successful statewide bandh in protest on 3 January.

This is another instance of increasing attacks on minorities, particularly the Muslims; and Dalits and Adivasis by RSS led forces under patronage of BJP governments at centre and states. The victims mostly belong to the working class, agricultural workers and small peasants and are the marginalised section of the society.

Hindutva ideology suits in the strategy of the ruling classes to divide the toiling masses who are fighting against the neoliberal policies.

CITU called upon the working class and other secular democratic sections to come forward in defending the unity of the toiling masses fighting for their lives and livelihood and defeat the divisive designs of Hindutva forces.

Notice

CITU General Council Meeting

Date: 23-26 March 2018;
Time: From 10 a.m. of 23rd to afternoon of 26th March
Place: Kozhikode, Kerala
Agenda:

1. Presidential Address;
2. General Secretary's Report;
3. Future Course of Struggles, both Joint Movement and Independent Initiative;
4. Amendment of Constitution of CITU;
5. On Updating of Bhubaneswar Document on Organisation;
6. Any Other Issues with the Permission of Chair;

Delegates Fee: Rs.1000 each.

Note:

1. The meeting of the CITU GC tier of All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (AICCWW) will be held on 22 March at the same venue of the GCM from 10 am on 21 March. The meeting will be attended also by non-GCM conveners of the state units of AICCWW.
2. Book both way journey tickets in advance;
3. Inform Reception Committee in advance about participants' journey plan;
Reception Committee: Chairman: Elamaram Kareem – phone: 09400307786, General Convener P.K. Mukundan – phone: 09446782738, Treasurer T. Dasan phone: 09447721922

CITU District Committee Office

S.K. Temple Road, near EMS Stadium; Kozhikode-673001
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- **Tapan Sen**
General Secretary

ENSURE VICTORY OF THE LEFT FRONT, EIGHTH TIME

CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen in Election Rallies in Tripura

They are raising slogan of patriotism, but selling the country to foreign capital; they are pursuing anti-people policies and imposing an authoritarian regime on the people of India; they are diving the working people who are fighting for their rights and livelihood; they are BJP, the enemy of the country and its people said CITU national general secretary, member of the Parliament and CPI(M) central committee member Tapan Sen while addressing two election meetings at Matabari and Jamjuri in Udaipur subdivision of Tripura on Tuesday, 23 January. That is why they are conspiring to remove the Left Front government of Tripura, who is setting example in the country of pursuing alternative pro-people agenda despite limitations, said Tapan Sen.

On Tuesday, thousands of people from each booth of South Matabari, Matabari, Chandrapur, Chandrapur Colony, Chandrapur village areas reached in processions, raising their red flags high in confidence with their struggle experience; at the Matabari shopping centre ground for the Left Front election rally in which Tapan Sen was the main speaker. Ila Chakravorty presided. Others who addressed the rally include Left Front's CPI(M) candidate Madhab Saha of Matabari assembly constituency and the CPI(M) Udaipur subdivision secretary Manik Biswas.

The other election rally, addressed Tapan Sen as the main speaker; was at Jamjuri school ground on the same day presided over by Shipra Majumdar. The rally was also addressed by CPI(M)'s Udaipur subdivision leader Nitai Biswas, its local committee secretary Chandramohan Das, RSP leader Dipak Deb and the Left Front's RSP candidate of the assembly constituency Srikant Datta. Thousands of people assembled for this election rally coming from Paltana, East Paltana, Murapara, Dudhpuskarini, and Rajdhar Nagar areas.

Addressing these rallies Tan Sen said, BJP is the party of looters. Like Congress, BJP also protects the interests of the rich exploiting the peasant and working class masses. BJP government refuses to protect India's rich multiple culture and use diversionary tactics from the real issues of the people by using the majority religion as the tool. BJP is taking the country in the path of ruination; workers are losing jobs, peasants are committing suicide.

The people are raising the question as to how in such situation the workers and peasants are in better conditions in Left ruled states of Tripura and Kerala. These are creating problem for the BJP to rule the country. Therefore, conspiracy was hatched to uproot the Left Front government in Tripura, despite it being a small state. They are distributing huge money and alluring the people. Peaceful Tripura is being disturbed. They entered in electoral understanding with those who are demanding separate state. These must be resisted.

While in the whole country, the workers and peasants are losing jobs and their livelihood; in Tripura the jobs are being created, despite limitation, and providing 30 types of allowances. MNREGA was the outcome of poor people's struggle. Modi government is cutting it down and attempting to eliminate it completely. Tripura government is providing jobs by providing money from its own exchequer. While there are corruption cases in BJP ruled states, there is not a single instance of corruption of Tripura ministers. This is the Tripura people's prestige which must be protected.

Those leaders, who left Congress and joined BJP via TMC, are known to the people of Tripura for their blood shedding earlier rule. That is why it is the responsibility of the people of Tripura to establish the Left Front government for the eighth time; completely eliminating the conspirators and perpetrators of terror stricken earlier regime. Take this message to every house in Tripura, Tapan Sen said.

Bawana Fire Killed 17 Workers

Fire broke out in an industrial unit in the Bawana Industrial Area of Delhi on 20 January in which 17 workers, men and women, lost their lives and 2 more workers are in critical conditions. A team of CITU Delhi state committee with its state secretary Anurag Saxena and Siddeshwar Shukla, H. C. Pant, Harpal Singh, D. N. Singh, Sunaina, Rajender along with local AIDWA leader Farida visited the accident site next day on 21 January, met the workers in the industrial area and local residents; and investigated on the causes of this gruesome incident.

CITU team met the family members of the deceased workers at their residences in nearby place, consoled them and offered every help to get justice for the murder of their dear ones and adequate compensation for the loss of their bread earners.

Based on their investigation, CITU team submitted memoranda to the Delhi state labour minister and the labour commissioner demanding time bound investigation on the incident fixing responsibilities of the persons in various government agencies; inspection of other industrial units in the area along with the fire safety audit and action against the culprit owners for willful negligence; and Rs.20 lakh as compensation, in addition to the amount due under Workmen Compensation Act, to the next of kin of each of the deceased raising it from Rs.5 lakh as was announced by the chief minister.

CITU team found that there was open misuse of licenses for industrial units; complete lack of safety measures including protection from fire; gross violation of labour laws and complete failure of timely inspections.

A 100 sq mts plot of the industrial unit, where the fire incident took place, was originally allotted to one Subhash Mittal in the name of Diamond Plastic Industries. He rented the building to one Satish Goel who, in turn, let it out to Manoj Jain. The plot was allotted to carry out the activity of plastic molding, a non-hazardous work. But it was being used for illegal fire crackers manufacturing, a highly hazardous activity. This industrial area has small scale industries having single entry having no other exit route in case of such accident.

35-40 workers were engaged in that particular factory. Most of them were migrants workers from Sitapur and Unnao districts of UP and some were from Bihar. Almost all of them had joined the factory recently. At the time of incident, reportedly about 27-28 workers had been working inside the factory. As the fire broke out police men, who reached there early, managed to rescue 7-8 workers, still 20 of them remained inside and 17 workers could not save their lives. 4 workers were so charred by fire that they could not be identified. As per report of fire department, this building had only one entry and exit gate. The door to the terrace was also locked.

Though the owner Manoj Jain has been arrested and charged under Sec.304 of IPC, there are multiple agencies who are responsible for such tragic incident. Those include-

- DSIIDC, who allots the plot and is responsible for its upkeep of the development of the area.
- North Delhi Municipal Corporation who sanctions building plans and issue trade licenses.
- Fire department who gives no objection certificate for fire safety manuals. Fire inspectors are supposed to inspect the premises at regular intervals.
- Inspector of Factories under state labour department issues factory license. Labour inspectors are supposed to inspect at intervals.

The CITU team found that each worker was getting Rs.5000 - Rs.6000 per month in violation of notified minimum wage. They had no PF or ESI coverage. Labour laws were being grossly flouted.

Workers from other factories also reported that fire incident is usual feature in this area. More than 436 calls were registered by the fire department in 2017 alone from this industrial area. 90% of the owners of the industries do not have the mandatory no objection certificate and are running without requisite fire safety arrangements.

- Anurag Saxena

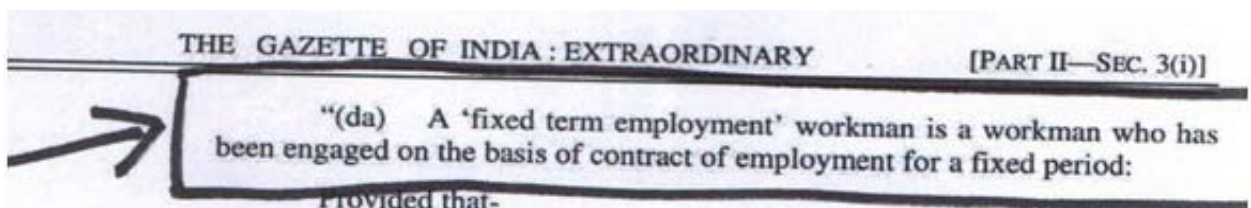
'Fixed Term Employment'

To replace Permanent Employment

Draft Notification Issued

BJP government at the centre has planned 'employment generation' (?) by replacing each permanent employment by number of fixed time employment in all sectors of industries and services. Consider this, a permanent employee remaining 30 years in service till retirement may be replaced by 6 or more fixed time employees each for every 5 years of less.

For this purpose, the Central government issued a gazette notification on 8 January, 2018 on a draft of amendment in the Industrial Employment (Standing Order) Central Rules giving 30 days public notice proposing introduction of '*Fixed Term Employment*' in all sectors.



In response to this notification, in a letter on 10 January, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen accused the labour ministry for surreptitiously issuing the notification without caring for and contrary to the usual practice of holding discussion with the central trade unions (CTUs) prior to introduction of such amendments in labour laws and rules.

A similar amendment in the Standing Order Central Rules was introduced by the then BJP government on 10 December, 2003 despite united opposition by all CTUs. However, in the face of workers' countrywide opposition and protest actions, the government had to rescind the same through gazette notification in 2007.

BJP led government again ventured to introduce the "Fixed Term Employment" in all sectors through similar notification on 29 April, 2015. At that time also CITU and all other CTUs strongly protested following which government did not proceed further on this, particularly after all central trade unions served joint notice of countrywide workers general strike on 2 September, 2015 in pursuance of their 12 point common charter of demands.

As a prelude to the present move, the government made amendment in the Rules for '*fixed term employment in apparel manufacturing sector*' by notification dated 7.10.2016 despite opposition by CITU and other CTUs. The government at that time took the plea, "The decision would facilitate employment of workers in Apparel manufacturing on fixed term basis in the backdrop of seasonal nature of sector." explained the union labour ministry to the leaders of the central trade unions and later in their press note.

However, BJP government's real intention became clear now proposing amendment in point 2 of the Draft replacing '*fixed term employment in apparel manufacturing sector*' by '*fixed term employment*'. Existing Rules, after 2016 amendment, have classified workmen as "*Permanent, Probationers, Badlis, Temporary, Casual, Apprentices and Fixed Term Employment in Apparel Manufacturing Sector.*" With the proposed amendment now, the workmen would be classified as "Permanent, Probationers, Badlis, Temporary, Casual, Apprentices and Fixed Term Employment." (*Underline added for emphasis*)

Draft rules

1. (1) These rules may be called the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central (Amendment) Rules, 2018.
~~(2) They shall come into force on the date of their final publication in the Official Gazette.~~
 2. In the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 (20 of 1946), in Schedule, in item 1, for the words "fixed term employment workmen in apparel manufacturing sector;"; the words "fixed term employment" shall be substituted;
-

The proposed amended Rule made proviso that these fixed term employee's "hours of work, wages, allowances and other benefits shall not be less than that of a permanent workman." Fine; but that is proportionate to the period of service. That is, each fixed time employee shall begin at the entry point of the service with usual probation, confirmation and remuneration as a beginner.

In CITU letter, the Tapan Sen gave example of the employees of Alliance Air, the subsidiary of Air India, who were recruited in fixed term employment, are deprived of similar pay and facilities of those in Air India. Repeated letters of CITU to Air India management remain unanswered. That is an example of same wages and facilities of permanent and fixed time employees!

The very temporary character of employment makes the job security fragile for fixed term employees and the present move of the government is only for 'ease of doing business' for the corporates. CITU strongly opposed the proposed amendments. (*Underline added for emphasis*)

Closure of Govt's & Railways Printing Presses

During Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha on 2 January, raising the issue of closure of 12 out of 17 printing presses of the Government of India and the move of Railways to close down all its printing presses situated in different parts of the country; CITU general secretary Tapan Sen pointed out that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Urban Development, in its report of 10 August 2017, had termed these closures as '*extremely unfair*'.

Deposing before the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the concerned ministry had stated that all these presses had been working hard, their efforts were 'outstanding' and they were managing their economy well despite serious manpower shortage and different ministries owing Rs.390 crores to these presses against the work done. On that basis, the Standing Committee unanimously recommended modernization and development of all the presses instead of closing. Similar is the situation in Railways.

Against such closure move, the workers and employees of these presses have been continuously agitating countrywide, including at Santragachi in Howrah district of West Bengal..

Sen demanded that the Government and Railways should desist from dismantling its printing and stationary division. Other Rajya Sabha MPs - T.K. Rangarajan (Tamilnadu), K.K. Ragesh (Kerala), C.P. Narayanan (Kerala) and K. Somaprasad (Kerala) – all of CPI(M); P. Bhattacharya (West Bengal) – of Congress; D. Raja (Tamil Nadu) – of CPI; Kiranmay Nanda (UP) and Neeraj Shekhar (UP) – of SP; Vijila Sathyananth (Tamil Nadu) – of AIADMK; Vivek Gupta (West Bengal) and Md. Nadimul Haque (West Bengal) – of TMC; and others associated themselves with the statement of made by Tapan Sen.

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Scheme Workers

17 JANUARY, 2018

MASSIVE UNITED COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE

60 Lakh on Strike; 20 Lakh on Street

It was a historic day for the trade union movement in India when nearly 60 lakh scheme workers of Anganwadi, Mini Anganwadi, Asha, Mid Day Meal, NCLP, small savings, SSA, NRLM, MNREGA, para teachers, etc; almost 90% of whom were women, went on, for the first time, in the united nationwide strike on 17 January 2018 at the united call of the central trade unions (CTUs). The strike was joined by several independent unions and went beyond the membership of the unions. About 20 lakh of the striking workers joined the demonstrative programmes across the country.

The main demands of the strike are (1) To Implement the recommendations of the 45th ILC on scheme workers – (i) recognition as workers, (ii) minimum wages not less than Rs.18,000 per month and (iii) social security including monthly pension of not less than Rs.3000 and coverage of EPF and ESI; (2) Adequate financial allocation in the Union budget 2018-19 for the centrally sponsored schemes including ICDS, MDMS, NHM, SSA, NCLP etc to ensure increase in their wages to the level of minimum wages; and universalisation of the schemes with adequate infrastructure and quality services; and (3) No privatisation of the schemes in any form and no subversion by way of cash transfer or exclusion of beneficiaries.

The strike was a total despite threats by several state governments threatening retrenchment, wage cuts for one week to one month for a day's strike etc. In Telangana, one DRDO issued notice to MNREGA field assistants that their strike was against the sovereignty and integrity of the nation(!) Modi government and BMS also tried to misguide the workers by spreading rumours of increase in wages, coverage of ESI, PF etc. In West Bengal, the chief minister herself threatened mass dismissal of striking workers. Striking workers held demonstrations in about 500 districts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura in the North East; West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand in the East; Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Rajasthan in the North; Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa in the West; and Kerala, Karnataka, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu and Telangana in the South. In Andhra Pradesh the strike will take place on 23 January.

In Assam, despite Bihu festival, demonstrations were held in several districts. In Bihar, several central trade unions jointly and independently held demonstrations. In West Bengal a huge rally was held in Kolkata apart from holding district level demonstrations defying the threat of the chief minister and administration. In Mursheedabad district, 2 Anganwadi centres were forcibly shut by the administration next day.

In Haryana huge mobilization of Anganwadi, Asha and Midday Meal workers took place in all the districts. 20,000 out of total 22,000 Asha workers in the state were on strike. They are also preparing 4 days strike next week. In Jammu and Kashmir, scheme workers under CITU banner staged demonstrations at several places of Jammu and in Kashmir valley.

In Delhi, the scheme workers of Delhi and a few Anganwadi workers from Punjab marched from Mandi House to Parliament Street where they were stopped by police. The workers broke the

police cordon and marched to Parliament Street and held meeting. The march was led by leaders of central trade unions including Dhirender Sharma (AITUC); Manjeet, Rajender (HMS); A R Sindhu, Usharani, Ranjana Nirula, Anurag Saxena (CITU); Santosh Roy (AICCTU), M Chourasia (AIUTUC). Later, a joint memorandum was submitted to the finance ministry.

In Chhattisgarh a huge rally of Anganwadi workers and helpers was organised by 5 trade unions in Raipur. District level demonstrations were also held. 75,000 Anganwadi, Asha, Mid Day Meal workers held protest demonstrations in 22 districts In Gujarat,.

In Kerala all trade unions jointly held marches to the central government offices. In Karnataka, the scheme workers held a 24 hour Padav in front of the four central ministers belonging to the state. In Sirsi, in front of Annathkumar's house near about 5000 workers staged demonstration and submitted memorandum. In front of Sadanandagowda's residence near about 4500 workers protested. In Bijapur, central minister Ramesh Ginjanagi was forced to reach the protest place and receive the memorandum from the agitating 4500 workers.

In many states like Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, demonstrations and dharnas were held in front of the camp offices of ministers of the Modi government. The ministers were compelled to hold discussions with the trade unions. In most states the demonstrations were held jointly by the CTUs. At few places the programmes were organised independently. The CTUs in a joint statement congratulated the scheme workers for the successful strike and declared future course of joint struggle including indefinite strike and Padav, to be decided after the Union budget 2018-19, depending on the response of the government. The CTUs called for immediate protest on 1 or 2 February, soon after presentation of union budget in the Parliament in case there is no proper allocation of fund for the scheme workers and for the schemes.

- A. R. Sindhu

Coal

10th Wage Agreement in Coal Industry

D. D. Ramanandan

Coal India Limited (CIL), including its subsidiary companies and Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL), the Telangana state and central governments' joint enterprise; is the first central public sector enterprise (CPSE) which successfully completed wage negotiation within 10 months of the constitution of 10th bipartite wage negotiating committee, known as JBCCI-X; and after 10 rounds of discussion on wages, allowances, social security, safety etc signed 10th national wage agreement for the coal workers in New Delhi on 10.10.2017.

Salient Features of the Agreement

This wage agreement has several important features for the workers in a CPSE. This agreement was signed without waiting for DPE (Department of Public Enterprises) guideline for wage agreements in CPSEs.

The other salient features of the agreement are that, (1) the agreement is for 5 years retrospectively effective from 1.7.2016 on expiry of 9th wage agreement; (2) the minimum guaranteed benefit (MGB) is 20% of total emoluments i.e. basic + variable dearness allowance (VDA) + special dearness allowance (SDA) + attendance bonus as was on 30.6.2016; (3) VDA shall be 100% neutralization for all employees; (4) annual increment is 3% of the basic on progression basis; (5) special allowance is 4% of revised basic from 1.7.2016; (6) underground (U/G) allowance is 9% of revised basic retrospectively effective from 1.7.2016 which for North Eastern Coalfields (NEC) is 10.5%; (7) other existing allowances have been enhanced by around 20%.

Social Security

Three significant social security measures have been incorporated in this agreement. (1) In the corpus of CMPS-98 (Coal Mines Pension Scheme 1998) the existing contributions are variable – 1.16% to 1.62% by the management and 3.16% to 6.16% by the workers. These have been raised to 7% of the revised basic and VDA by both, the management and the workers, after subsuming the existing percentages in it. (2) A Contributory Post-Retirement Medicare Scheme for Non-Executives (CPMRS-NE) was introduced in November, 2014 as a temporary scheme with one time worker's contribution of Rs.40,000. 10th Agreement incorporated an additional management's one time contribution of Rs.18,000 per member in the scheme. Further, a trust will be formed with the management's and unions' representatives in JBCCI to regulate, monitor and administer this post-retirement medical scheme. (3) Employees suffering from heart diseases, TB, cancer, leprosy, paralysis, renal disease, HIV and brain disease / disorder were being allowed 6 months special medical leave on 50% of last drawn total emoluments (Basic + VDA + SDA). 10th Agreement raised this benefit from 6 months to till they are declared fit by the company's medical board or any other hospital to which the cases may be referred for treatment by the management.

For the Contract Labour

The contract workers in coal were brought, for the first time, in last coal workers national wage agreement in JBCCI-IX. The wages with VDA were decided by the bipartite High Power Committee (HPC) for the first time for contract labour in any CPSE. However, there were complaints of delayed, diluted and non-implementation by the CIL subsidiaries and SCCL. This Agreement incorporated two provisions in respect of contract labour that (1) a committee will be constituted with representatives of the management and the trade unions to monitor effective implementation of the wages recommended by the HPC; and (2) that, another bipartite HPC will be constituted for revision of the wages and other social security measures for them.

Other Issues in the Agreement

1. Earlier, there were variation and discrimination in respect of festival holidays, holidays and working hours for monthly-rated and daily-rated employees in different establishments. This agreement incorporated provision by which all such employees shall avail same number of holiday and equal working hours in all establishments.

2. Leave accumulation has been enhanced – earned leave from 140 to 150 days and sick leave from 110 to 120 days.

3. Management will pay to the worker lump sum amount of Rs.8000 for visiting home town and Rs.12,000 for Bharat Bhraman once in 4 years. Earlier, agreement had provision connecting the entitlement of the benefits on availing 13 days earned leave for each benefit which has been removed from this agreement.

4. Under Life Cover Scheme, lump sum payment to the worker has been increased from Rs.1.12 lakh to Rs.1.25 lakh.

5. In addition to the compensation under Workmen's Compensation Act in case of death or permanent disablement resulting from accident in course employment, the ex-gratia amount, payable to the worker, has been enhanced from Rs.84,000 to Rs.90,000.

6. An amount at Rs.5 lakh shall be paid to the next of kin of an employee in case at a fatal mine accident.

7. There is a provision since earlier 7th, 8th and 9th wage agreements that a committee will be constituted consisting of representatives of trade unions and the management to finalize the scheme for employment or financial benefit to the dependent (dependent of employee medically

unfit, natural death or accidental death) and that, till submission of the report, status quo shall be maintained. The same provision continues in the 10th wage agreement also.

Out of five central trade unions in JBCCI – INTUC, HMS, AITUC, CITU and BMS; INTUC could not participate in the negotiation due to restriction put by High Court's order on a petition by a rival faction in INTUC. HMS participated in the discussion fully, agreed on almost all points, but did not sign the agreement. On 23 September 2017, during ongoing negotiation, INTUC unilaterally had announced series of agitational programmes including stoppage of coal transportation during 30 October to 2 November and 3 days strike on 6-8 November, 2017. HMS independently staged demonstrations in front of the subsidiaries' headoffices on 1 November. However, there was lack of response of the coal workers to the call of agitation by INTUC and HMS coal federations.

(D.D. Ramanadan is CITU national secretary and general secretary of its All India Coal Workers Federation)

Public Sector

Movement Intensifies Against DCI Privatisation

In an unique expression of solidarity with the fighting workers, the people of Visakhapatnam voted against privatisation of central public sector Dredging Corporation of India (DCI) in overwhelming majority of 98.8% of total 1.013 lakh votes casted in the people's ballot. Greater Visakha city committee of CITU, all trade unions and several political parties organised door to door campaign seeking support to the demand of withdrawal of the decision of privatization of DCI by BJP government at the centre.

There is strong feeling among the people at Visakhapatnam against DCI privatization from earlier experience of privatization of Hindustan Zinc. After its taking over, Vedanta first drastically reduced manpower and then closed Hindustan Zinc in 2013 though running in profit.

On 2 November, 2017 the central Cabinet took decision and formed Inter Ministerial Group to speed up DCI privatization. CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP immediately wrote to the prime minister opposing the decision. In fact, the concerned Parliamentary standing committee in their 170th 'Report on Modernisation of Major Ports' observed that *"Huge funds are outstanding due to DCI from various agencies and as a result of which the DCI has not been able to take up development activities. It seems some sort of anarchic decisions are being taken with the vested interests in Government to make DCI a sick unit which resulted in taking over of the dredging work by the private companies at exorbitant rates."*

Suicide of DCI young worker Venkatesh on 4 December protesting against government's decision (*The Working Class, January 2018*) has had its wide impact. On 7 December, the Chief Minister assured the delegation, led by CITU state president Ch. Narsingarao, of Rs.5 lakh compensation to Venkatesh' family and seriously taking up the issue with the central government. Chief minister informed the delegation that the central government had not even consulted the state government before taking the decision on DCI privatization. Andhra Pradesh government had already signed an MOU during the International Summit in 2016 for construction of a dredging institute and repair shop at "Antervedi" in East Godavari district with an investment of Rs.800 core and providing 2000 employment which will not materialize if DCI is privatised.

Since 30 November DCI workers and officers are on relay hunger strike at 3 Horses junction near Visakhapatnam Port Trust Main. There is wide support from political parties and several of their leaders, including Janasena leader and actor Pawan Kalyan, YSR Congress M.P. Vijayasaireddy, state secretaries of CPI(M) P. Madhu and of CPI Ramakrishna visited the agitation camp and extended their support.

Scheme Workers Countrywide Strike

17 January 2018 (East)



Assam



West Bengal



Tripura



Odisha



Bihar



Jharkhand

Scheme Workers Countrywide Strike

17 January 2018 (North)



Uttar Pradesh



Uttarakhand



Haryana



Rajasthan



Himachal Pradesh



Punjab



Jammu, J&K



Kulgaon, J&K

Scheme Workers Countrywide Strike

17 January 2018 (West)



Maharashtra

Madhya Pradesh



Chhattisgarh



Gujarat



Scheme Workers Countrywide Strike

17 January 2018 (South)



Mallapuram,
Kerala

Telangana



Tamilnadu



Karnataka

Unions of Vizag Steel plant, BHEL, HPCL, Hindustan Shipyard, LIC, Banks; FMRAI, all India pensioners organisation etc in solidarity joined the relay hunger strike.

On 6 January, CITU president K. Hemalata visited the relay hunger strike camp and greeted the DCI employees for their 40 days continued agitation. Later, addressing a public meeting, organised by CITU city committee, she lashed out Modi government for its anti PSU policies and dismantling of PSUs, which have contributed in the country's economic growth, for favoring their corporate friends in India and abroad. She extended CITU's complete support to the agitating DCI employees and congratulated all trade unions, irrespective of their political affinity, for standing in support of DCI employees and against the strategic sale of DCI.

Kerala CPSUs organised a day's dharna near shipping ministry office joined by the workers of Fact, Cochin Shipyard, Refinery, BPCI, DCI, HOC Port, HIL, Forward Seamen Union. The dharna was addressed by CITU national secretary Chandranpillai. (*Inputs; Kumarmangalam*)

Railways

Privatisation of Railway Stations

The railway minister Piyush Goyal in a statement in Rajya Sabha on 5 January 2018, in reply to a question, said that the Union Cabinet already decided to privatise 400 railway stations; all of 'A-1' and 'A' category; and, accordingly, 23 railway stations had been notified for tendering in the first stage.

These stations in the list of privatisation of rail stations in the first phase include 6 in Maharashtra - Lokmanya Tilak, Pune, Thane, Mumbai Central, Bandra Terminus and Borivali; 1 in West Bengal – Howrah; 2 in Andhra Pradesh – Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada; 1 in Telangana – Secunderabad; 2 in Uttar Pradesh – Kanpur Central and Allahabad; 1 in Assam – Kamakhya; 1 in Rajasthan – Udaipur City; 1 in Haryana – Faridabad; 1 in Jammu & Kashmir – Jammu Tawi; 1 in Jharkhand – Ranchi; 1 in Tamilnadu – Chennai Central; 1 in Kerala – Kozhikode; 2 in Karnataka – Yashwantpur and Bangalore Cantt and 2 in Madhya Pradesh – Indore and Bhopal.

The minister informed the Rajya Sabha that for bidding for these 23 stations, "single bid each for only two stations (Jammu Tawi and Kozhikode) were received." And, for other tendered stations, there was lack of bidders' interest and the openings of tenders were repeatedly postponed. "However, no bids were obtained for stations where tenders were open, except Jammu and Kozhikode stations."

Defence

Privatisation of Defence Industry

Compromise with National Security

All three recognised federations of Defence civilian employees - All India Defence Employees Federation (AIDEF), federations of INTUC and of BMS – have jointly decided to launch countrywide agitation by 4 lakh Defence civilian employees, working in more than 430 Defence establishments in different parts of the country, by resorting to boycott of food and tea on 11 January; mass deputation to establishment heads and submission of memoranda on 12 January; massive all India demonstration before the Parliament on 15 February and a day's token strike on 15 March, 2018 to register their protest against Modi government's decision to privatise defence production

by outsourcing to private sector more than 250 items, which are being manufactured in 41 ordnance factories today, by declaring those items as non-core items; payment of Rs.10,000 per soldier as uniform allowance in place of stitched uniforms which will affect more than 12,000 employees who are engaged in strategic uniform manufacturing in 5 ordnance factories today; closure of station workshops; handing over army-base workshops to private contractors; closure of depots and 39 military farms; reduction of manpower in MES; diluting the role of DRDO and DGGA; declaring 31,000 employees as surplus; privatisation of work being done by navy etc; and also to register their protest against government's apathy in responding to the four joint memoranda submitted earlier to the defence minister and for not holding discussion with the recognised federations on these issues.

Since the state owned Defence industry is the fourth force of the Defence, the federations demanded that these industries should be maintained and strengthened by treating them as 'War Reserve' at par with the Armed Forces.

BJP Government's List of CPSEs

For Private Management Control through Strategic Sale; BEML Disinvestment Deferred

In a written reply to the specific questions from M. B. Rajesh, CPI(M) MP from Kerala, the Minister of State for Defence Subhash Bhamre informed the Lok Sabha on 3 January, 2018 that the proposed disinvestment of BEML (Bharat Earth Movers Ltd) under the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence has been deferred stating, "Government has deferred the strategic disinvestment of BEML in order to undertake further diligence exercise on various aspects as considered necessary."

It may be recalled, the workers of BEML with people's support had been agitating in Karnataka and Kerala against the proposed disinvest of BEML (*The Working Class; July 2017*).

In reply to another question, the minister submitted a list of central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) for which the "Government has given 'in principle' approval for strategic disinvestment." The CPSEs for 'strategic disinvestment' (meaning total private management control) are (1) Scooters India Ltd; (2) Bridge & Roof India Ltd.; (3) Project & Development India Ltd.; (4) Pawan Hans Ltd.; (5) Bharat Pumps Compressors Ltd.; (6) Central Electronics Ltd.; (7) Hindustan Prefab Ltd.; (8) Bharat Earth Movers Ltd.; (9) Hindustan Newsprint Ltd. (subsidiary) (10) Ferro Scrap Nigam Ltd. (subsidiary); (11) Hindustan Fluorocarbon Ltd. (subsidiary); (12) Cement Corporation of India Ltd.; (13) Nagarnar Steel Plant of NMDC.;(14) Bhadrawati, Salem and Durgapur units of SAIL; (15) HSCC (India) Ltd.; (16) National Projects Construction Corporation (NPCC).; (17) Engineering Projects (India) Ltd.; (18) Air India.; (19) Dredging Corporation of India Ltd.; (20) HLL Lifecare Ltd.; (21) Indian Medicines & Pharmaceutical Corporation Ltd.; (22) Karnataka Antibiotics and Pharmaceuticals Ltd.; (23) Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd.; (24) Units / JVs of ITDC.

Victimised Security Guards in BEML Reinstated

On the eve of new year of 2018, BEML Limited (formerly Bharat Earth Movers Limited), the Miniratna PSU, removed 8 security guards, who had been working as contract workers for more than 2 decades in its office and store at Bhilai in Chhattisgarh, without any notice or even prior intimation. A security company of Nagpur was appointed as a new contractor. Immediately on

completion of tender process, the new contractor had sent new batch of contract employees as security guards under a supervisor to take charge of the security of BEML premises at Bhilai. Neither the principal employer BEML nor the contractor served any notice of termination of services to the existing 8 security guards.

The victimised employees approached Hindusthan Steel contract workers union of CITU. The union took up the matter with the BEML management as the termination of the services of existing security guards was unfair. The operation head of the new contractor rushed from Nagpur and on reaching BEML office at Bhilai invited the union for discussion. After 2 hours long negotiation between the CITU union leaders and the BEML district manager and the operation head of the contractor security company on 8 January, the contractor company reinstated all existing security guards. (*Inputs: Yogesh Kumar Saini*)

Transport **Significant Strike of** **Tamil Nadu State Transport Workers**

Tamil Nadu State Transport workers resorted to spontaneous statewide strike from 5 January in protest against government's betrayal and attempt to divide workers by entering into agreement with the puppet unions during pendency of charter of demands on wage revision due since 1.10.2016. The strike was joined even by the members of the signatory unions. While negotiation was continuing at different levels, the government and some puppet unions, including the union of the ruling party, signed an agreement on 4 January under sec.12 (3) of I. D. Act with lesser fitment benefit of 2.44% of basic pay plus grade pay while all the unions and workers have been demanding fitment benefits of 2.57% at par with the government employees.

Other demands of the striking employees include immediate payment / deposition of all accumulated post retirement dues amounting to Rs.1660 crores for the 70,000 already retired employees and Rs.460 crores of the 1.2 lakh serving employees. The third major demand includes promotion policy as many employees are facing stagnation even after 15-20 years service.

The strike continued with vigour, the family members of the workers joining, despite high court's order in a PIL case declaring the strike as illegal and asking the government to initiate disciplinary actions against the striking employees; and 7 January threatening order of the government. The strike was supported by all political parties except the ruling party. To break the strike the government even engaged unemployed youths to operate the buses which resulted in every day 15 to 20 buses meeting with accidents resulting in 3 persons' death till 9 January.

Ultimately, the ongoing strike was called off and notice of postponement of strike was served to the government giving a month's time after the division bench of the high court intervened, modifying the earlier high court's order, stating that no disciplinary action would be initiated against the striking employees without notice to the court and appointing a retired judge of high court as the arbitrator in wage revision and related matter; and the chief minister announcing release of Rs.750 crores against accumulated due retirement benefits of the employees.

All India Road Transport Workers' Federation called upon its unions in the country for solidarity and support to the striking employees; its dy. general secretary Laxmaiah meeting the striking employees at Chennai and congratulated the Tamil Nadu state transport workers for the magnificent strike and achievements.

Major decisions and Issues of ESIC Meeting

Prasanta N Chowdhury

172nd meeting of ESIC was held in New Delhi on 6 December, 2017. Following are the major decisions and issues discussed in the meeting.

- 1. Long gap between meetings:** This meeting took place after 10 months. Members criticised the ESIC authority for such long gap in holding meetings. Chairman assured that such delay would not recur in future.
- 2. On formation of ESIC societies in states:** This item in the agenda was objected to by all the employees' representative members of the trade unions as it would shift the responsibility from the government to the proposed societies for rendering service to IPs (insured persons in ESIC). The societies will have no commitment to the workers, who are contributing to ESIC. Present system of the rendering ESIC services by the central and state governments should continue, the TU members asserted. Some non-employee representatives in the committee appreciated the proposal as it would open the scope of implementation of PPP model. Chairman did not pay any heed to objections of the trade union representatives.
- 3. Upgrading dispensaries to 6-bedded hospitals:** With expansion of ESI coverage, it was decided that 1/3rd of ESI dispensaries would be upgraded to 6-bedded hospitals with 24 hours service on all days. The proposed norm was that the minimum gap between the hospitals would be 25 kms with concentration of 10,000 IPs with average OPD attendance @ 200 per day. Finally, however, it was decided that the minimum distance will be 10 kms and there will be different policies for urban and rural areas to ensure effective utilization of the establishment.
- 4. Approval of new hospital construction and extension:** Construction of 43 new hospitals and extension of existing hospitals in different states have been approved.
- 5. Proposed merger of sub regional offices:** ESIC proposed to merge its 18 SROs with other SROs or regional offices in different states. There were protests in different parts of the country against the proposal. CITU general secretary wrote to the union labour minister demanding its withdrawal particularly when ESIC services are expanding in all states and districts. Finally, the proposal was withdrawn.
- 6. Super specialty treatment:** Almost all members objected to unilaterally-issued circular no. V-14/11/5/2012-Med.I(Policy) dated 7.11.2016 withdrawing the scope of services of super specialty treatment of IPs and their family members before completion of 2 years of membership and implementation of it by force. Members pointed out that this circular is contrary to the provisions in ESI Act and that the Corporation had not approved any such proposal. Chairman reserved his comment. Entire matter has been kept for future decision.

(Prasanta N Chowdhury is CITU national secretary and its representative in ESIC)

STATES

Haryana

Protest against Handing over Anganwadi Centres to NGO



Gurgaon district unit of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union in Haryana held meeting at local Kamala Nehru Park on 27 December in protest against state government's attempt of handing over 10 Anganwadi centre of village Sarhol in the district to a NGO. The meeting adopted a resolution condemning the decision; decided to meet the project officer soon against this attempt and to intensify agitation if the government insist on its decision.

CITU state president Satbir Singh addressed the meeting opposing privatisation and raised basic demands of scheme workers about Rs.18,000 as minimum wage, social security and recognition as regular employees; and payment of due wages. The union's general secretary Saraswati Devi gave a call to make the scheme workers countrywide strike successful in the state. The meeting was chaired by the union's president Meena Devi.

Punjab

Meeting of Chawkidars

More than 200 delegates from 9 districts attended the state level general body meeting of Lal Jhanda Pendu Chawkidars Union of CITU at Shaheed Bhagat Singh Park in Garhshankar presided over by Paramjeet Singh Neelo.



Addressing the meeting CITU state general secretary Raghunath Singh congratulated the village chawkidars for the successes they achieved during last 3 years of struggle compelling to increase their remuneration by earlier Akali-BJP government @ Rs.200 and by the present Congress government @ another Rs.250 per month effective August 2017; and called upon them to make all India scheme workers strike on 17 January and workers satyagraha on 30 January successful in the State.

The meeting was also addressed by CITU state leaders Jatinderpal Singh, Mohinder Kumar Badhonwan, Mahan Singh Rorhi; leaders the union Harbhajan Dogranwali, Harjinder Atari, Devidass Miani, Shinder Singh; and others.

Workers Mass Convention



Over 500 activists and workers from different unions attended an impressive convention organised by CITU at Sudhar town of Ludhiana district to make 30 January Workers All India Satyagraha programme successful in the State.

The convention was addressed by CITU state leaders including its general secretary Raghunath Singh, Jatinderpal Singh, Tarsem Jodhan, Hanuman Parsad Dube and Parkash Singh Hissawal.

Andhra Pradesh

Struggle Reports

Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan: On 30 October, torch light rallies were held in 7 districts in which more than 6,000 people participated including 4,860 CITU workers.

Against Price Rise: On 13 November, campaign was organised in residential areas and at work places in 5 districts with 32,000 pamphlets.

Municipal workers Strike: Joint Action Committee (JAC) of municipal workers served joint notice of statewide strike to commence on 18 December demanding scrapping of work contract system and security of job and wage. Government held discussion with the unions on 16 December and prepared minutes on the basis of which AITUC union withdrew from strike. However, all other unions in JAC felt that the minutes were deficient in respect of security of job and wage and hence went ahead with the notified strike. In most places AITUC union members also joined the successful strike.

Ultimately, on 22 December, the government invited JAC for discussion. The striking unions demanded written assurance on job and wage protection. Ultimately, it was agreed and recorded in the minutes that all the existing workers would be retained by the contractors with protection of their existing wages and that would further be revised upward whenever new state PRC (Pay Revision Committee) recommendations are implemented. It was also agreed that the municipal commissioners would be the principal employers. However, JAC reserved its right to oppose and fight against the contract system which was recorded in the minutes and signed by the government. With this agreement the striking workers joined duties on 23 December.

Electricity Contract Workers Agitation: Demanding abolition of 'third party' contract system; direct payment of wages by the electricity corporations in line with Telangana; and equal pay for equal work; CITU union of contract workers in the two electricity distribution corporations, APEPDCL and APSPDCL, in the State launched statewide vigorous campaign by jeep jathas, one jatha covering 5 districts and all major substations in APEPDCL area and two jathas covering 4 districts in

APSPDCL area in 10 days. Jathas evoked good response from the workers. Jathas concluded in rallies with 250 workers joining in front APEPDCL and 2,500 workers in front of APSPDCL offices.

Jathas were followed by indefinite hunger strike from 20 November of 15 leaders at Vijayawada. On 4th day of the hunger strike, at night, the participating leaders were lifted and admitted in hospital by police; and the government gave assurance that a committee would be formed and discussion would be held on their demands within next 2 months.

CITU's independent campaign created conditions for all other unions coming forward and joining hands to form the "Joint Platform of AP Electricity Contract Workers." Under its banner, the unions organised 'Samara Bheri' procession and rally of 7,000 workers, coming from 13 districts; held public meeting at Vijayawada on 5 December addressed by the leaders of political parties, except BJP and TDP, and of all trade unions extending their support; and serving notice of indefinite strike to commence on 27 January, the day government's assurance of resolving the issues in 2 months time would be over.

Anganwadi Employees Agitation: Demanding minimum wages, pending wages and opposing centres merger; 15,000 Anganwadi employees joined dharnas in front of project directors' offices on 16 October. Statewide dharnas were staged at 106 projects and 211 mandal centres, with participation of 8,812 employees, on 4 December opposing integration of centres with Panchayats. Dharna was held at commissioner's office demanding reinstatement of link, crèche and nutrition councilors 13 December and after 4 days it was called off after an assurance by the commissioner that preference would be given to them in recruitment in future.

Industries & Sectors

Telecom

BSNL Workers-Officers Again On Joint Agitational Path

After 2 days successful countrywide joint strike by all unions and associations of non-executive and executive employees of BSNL on 12-13 December, 2017 (*The Working Class January, 2018*); the BSNL unions and associations including BSNLEU, NFTE, SNEA, AIBSNLEA, FNTTO, BTEU, SEWA BSNL, AIGETOA, BSNLMS, TEPU, BSNLATM and TOA BSNL held joint meeting in New Delhi on 8 January and decided to carry forward the movement to pursue their major demands of early 3rd pay revision and rolling back government's decision on creation of subsidiary company for handing over 90,000 BSNL towers in private hands.

The meeting decided struggle programme including **5 days Satyagraha** and **indefinite work-to-rule** beginning on 30 January by paying floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi by the leaders of all unions and associations; and a massive **March to Sanchar Bhawan** on 28 February.

The meeting further decided to meet the minister-in-charge soon; legal course against creation of subsidiary tower company; and to meet the leaders of trade unions and political parties for support. A steering committee was formed to monitor the struggle.

The charter of demands include (i) Early 3rd pay revision with 15% fitment effective from 1-1-2017; (ii) Pension revision; (iii) To settle left-out issues of 2nd PRC; (iv) Rolling back the decision of creation of subsidiary tower company; (v) No reduction in retirement age from 60 to 58 and (vi) No VRS. The meeting was presided over by FNTTO general secretary K. Jayaprakash.

(Inputs: P. Abhimanyu)

FIR against Journalist for Aadhar Exposé

Countrywide Protest by Journalists Organisations

In a joint statement on 8 January, the National Alliance of Journalists and the Delhi Union of Journalists condemned the filing of FIR against the *Tribune* reporter and her sources for exposing the leaks in the Aadhar system. This is an attack on the freedom of press. Attacks on the media and media persons are increasing, the statement said.

Instead, she should have been commended for bringing to light the easy access to UIDAI's data site and its availability for as little as Rs.500 to anyone who wants it. This ready access to individual addresses, mobile phone numbers, email addresses and photographs raises critical questions about the invasion of people's privacy through the Aadhar system, the statement said.

Several journalists and their other organizations across the country including the Editors Guild of India, Broadcasting Editors' Association, Press Association, Press Club of India, Jammu Press Club, Chandigarh Press Club, Indian Women's Press Corps, the Network of Women & Media also condemned this arbitrary action of the government.

CITU also, in a statement on 19 January, condemned Modi government for filing FIR against the *Tribune* reporter and her sources for exposing leakage-prone systemic fault in Aadhar administration and failure in protecting individual data and peoples' right to privacy, which has been upheld by the Supreme Court.

CITU appreciated the reporter for her exposé; welcomed and expressed solidarity with the rising protests by the journalists and newspaper employees unions and media organisations against such vindictive action of the governments; demanded of UIDAI to take corrective action and withdrawal of the FIR, filed against the journalist and others related in this.

More of Unacceptable Aadhar Story

Aadhar Personal Data Available to US Security Agencies: Two American companies were involved in preparing the software for Aadhar system which began during UPA regime. As per the contract signed, these companies are allowed to have access to the entire collected data base of Aadhar. As such, all the personal data of Aadhar card holders are already available to these companies which are linked with American security agencies.

Airtel Misappropriated Aadhar Card Holders' Subsidy Payments: Airtel mobile phone network asked its customers to link their phone numbers with Aadhar cards as mandatory requirement under government's direction. On doing so by the customer, Airtel opened bank accounts of the customers with the Airtel Payments Bank without their knowledge and consent. Under direct benefit payment, subsidies are directly paid to bank accounts. Under current rules, subsidies on LPG cylinders are paid to the last bank accounts of the customers. By this process Airtel Payment Bank collected Rs.190 crores money of the people. This was revealed when many customers could not find the LPG subsidy amounts in their regular bank accounts. However, the gravity of the fraud was minimised and Airtel Payment Bank was let off with suspension and fine.

PDS Link with Aadhar and Santoshi's Death: Rations under PDS is now made available only after linkage with Aadhar and biometric authentication of the PDS card holders in states like Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Telangana. Lakhs of families are deprived of rations in PDS shops because these shops do not have functional Aadhar's fingerprint identification machines. This led

to hunger deaths of the girl child Santoshi in Jharkhand (*The Working Class, December, 2017*) and several others.

(From: *Editorial of People's Democracy; 8-14 January, 2018*)

BJP Government's Corruption Route in Elections

"Contesting elections has now become akin to a business enterprise, possible only for the wealthy," wrote CPI(M)'s general secretary Sitaram Yechury, on behalf of his Party, in a letter to the union finance minister Arun Jaitley on 9 January, 2018.

Demanding ban on corporate funding to political parties, CPI(M) said "Corporates, especially big corporates, see funding of political parties as an investment, an effective and easy way of being able to push policy in directions that suit them. Political parties too, on being recipient of corporate funding use stints in government to make policies that suit 'friendly' corporates. These corporates constitute the 'supply side' of Corruption which is corroding our system." Instead, the corporates should be asked to give a part of their profits towards a State fund set aside for electoral funding, the letter suggested. The letter pointed out three complementary regressive steps which the present BJP government has taken in respect of Election funding as the route of Electoral corruption - (1) "What it does is to provide an 'Electoral Bonds route' for dubious funds, to pass, unrecorded and undeclared, shielded from the public eye, to certain political parties;" (2) "By lifting the maximum limit on Companies available for political donations allowed 'shell' companies being set up with black money to purely fund political parties;" and (3) "Having amended the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), retrospectively, via the Finance Bill, this government has made it possible for foreign funding to flood the coffers of political parties, adding a dangerous dimension to the stability of Indian democracy."

"Electoral Bonds, along with the retrospective amendment to the FCRA and the lifting of the maximum limit that corporates can contribute to political parties are the most retrogressive steps taken towards political funding in India and must be rolled back," the letter stated.

CITU Condemned FDI: 49% in Air-India & 100% in Retail

In a statement on 11 January, CITU denounced Modi government's announcement allowing 49% FDI in Air India and 100% in single brand retail trade. 49% FDI in Air India is actually the route to expedite privatisation and for its complete foreign takeover with its huge asset base and high-revenue earning international service network. Government's plea of Air India's huge burden of loss is false. The very policies and actions of successive governments are responsible for Air India's losses like hasty merger of Indian Airlines and Air India; and forcible procurement of huge fleet of aircrafts from foreign companies through direct purchase in most inopportune time. Despite these, Air India is on operational profit during last 3 years.

Modi government has taken such decision, because privatisation and foreign takeover are its goal, completely ignoring the unanimous recommendations of the concerned Parliamentary standing committee, which includes BJP MPs also, not to privatise Air India, at least for 3 more years while helping Air India to show improvement.

Equally condemnable is the government's decision of 100% FDI in single brand retail trade which will adversely and seriously affect the traditional retail sector which is already under difficulties due to fast corporatization of retail sector which is the second highest employment giver next only to agriculture, the statement said.

CITU called upon the working class to put up countrywide resistance against such decisions of Modi government through general and sectoral united struggle.

**CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS (GENERAL) FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS
(BASE 2001=100)**

State	Centre	Oct. 2017	Nov. 2017	State	Centre	Oct. 2017	Nov. 2017	
AP	GUNTUR	281	282	MHR	MUMBAI	295	295	
	VIJAYWADA	279	283		NAGPUR	317	317	
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	285	288		NASIK	295	295	
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	269	267		PUNE	278	279	
	GUWAHATI	253	254		SHOLAPUR	296	301	
	LABAC SILCHAR	261	261	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	304	307	
	MARIANI JORHAT	249	249		ROURKELA	310	315	
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	246	248	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	305	311	
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	308	306	PUN	AMRITSAR	287	285	
CHD	CHANDIGARH	283	281		JALANDHAR	288	289	
CHS	BHILAI	316	315		LUDHIANA	278	279	
DLI	DELHI	262	264	RJN	AJMER	263	263	
GOA	GOA	294	297		BHILWARA	278	282	
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	274	273		JAIPUR	274	273	
	BHAVNAGAR	269	269	TN	CHENNAI	266	270	
	RAJKOT	275	275		COIMBATORE	272	272	
	SURAT	264	266		COONOR	286	289	
	VADODARA	268	270		MADURAI	287	286	
HRY	FARIDABAD	259	263		SALEM	273	279	
	YAMUNANAGAR	275	277		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	295	296	
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	258	260	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	298	299	
J&K	SRINAGAR	265	268		HYDERABAD	252	253	
JRK	BOKARO	284	284		WARRANGAL	289	292	
	GIRIDIH	305	312	TRP	TRIPURA	266	269	
	JAMSHEDPUR	335	338	UP	AGRA	312	311	
	JHARIA	313	314		GHAZIABAD	283	288	
	KODARMA	329	332		KANPUR	292	292	
	RANCHI HATIA	328	331		LUCKNOW	277	279	
KNT	BELGAUM	296	299		VARANASI	285	285	
	BENGLURU	290	292	WB	ASANSOL	306	308	
	HUBLI DHARWAR	304	307		DARJEELING	266	265	
	MERCARA	300	305		DURGAPUR	313	315	
	MYSORE	298	301		HALDIA	316	317	
KRL	ERNAKULAM	297	298		HOWRAH	274	276	
	MUNDAKKAYAM	304	304		JALPAIGURI	283	284	
	QUILON	328	331		KOLKATA	276	273	
MP	BHOPAL	281	285		RANIGANJ	256	259	
	CHHINDWARA	297	296		SILIGURI	271	274	
	INDORE	261	263					
	JABALPUR	283	285					
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Scheme Workers Countrywide Strike

17 January 2018

In Kerala



Thiruvanthapuram

Palakkad



Against DCI Privatisation



Public meeting at Visakhapatnam



Dharna at Kochi



People casting votes

Scheme Workers Countrywide Strike

17 January 2018



Chhattisgarh



Haryana



Delhi