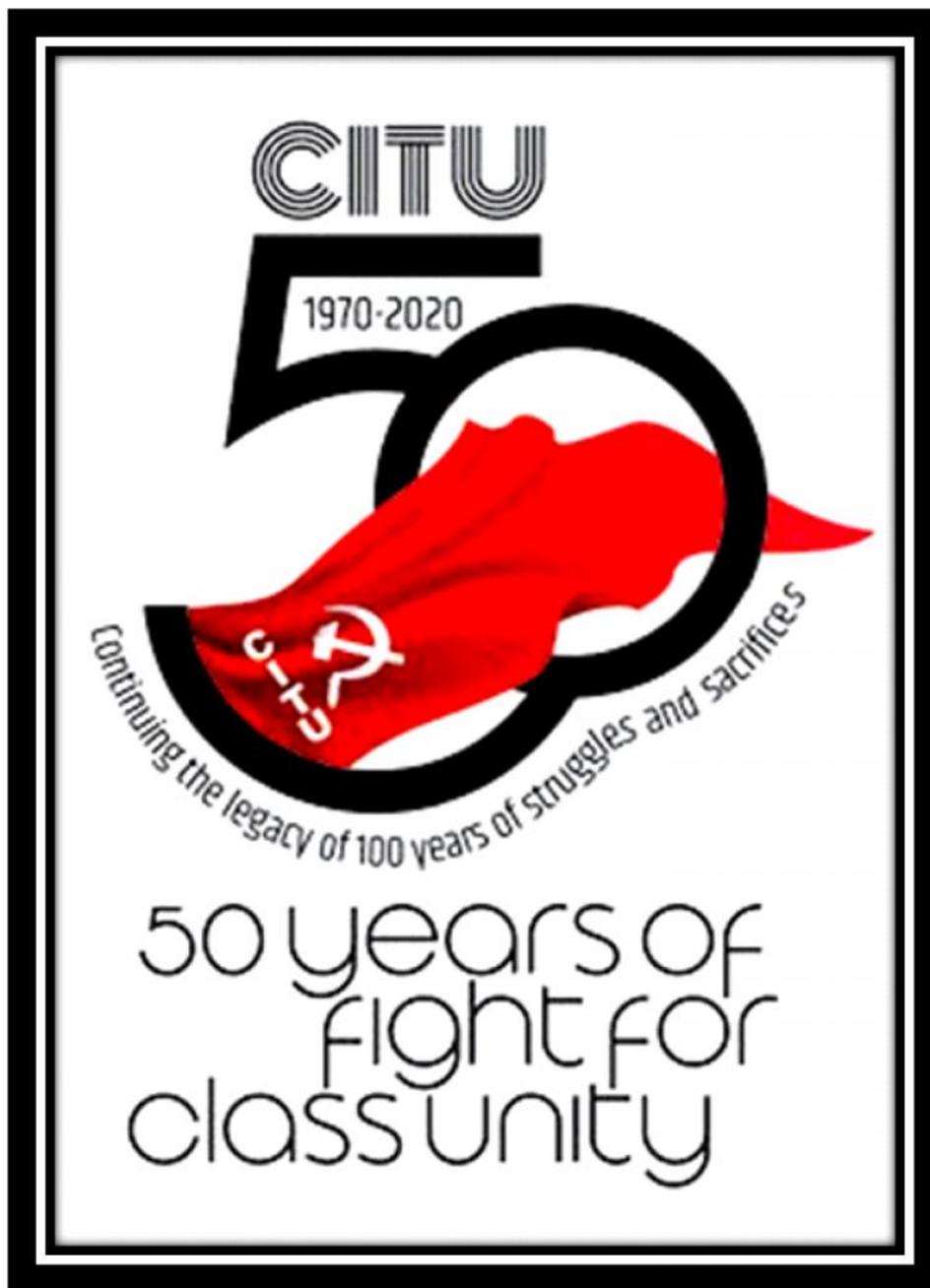




THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



Condolence

Comrade B Madhava



CITU expresses its grief at the demise of Comrade B. Madhava (83), former President of Karnataka State Committee of CITU from 2002 – 2010 and also President of All India Beedi Workers' Federation (AIBWF), who passed away on 19 June, 2019 at Mangalore after a prolonged illness. He was a Working Committee Member of CITU. Comrade Madhava was a member of state secretariat of the CPI(M).

Comrade Madhava started his trade union activities in LIC as its young employee and was the president Udipi Zone and vice president of South Zone of AIIEA. He was actively involved in organising the Beedi workers in the area and soon became the leader of the Beedi workers in Karnataka as the state president of beedi workers union.

Comrade Madhava was also active in fighting against social oppression and had actively led many movements in Mangalore including against the infamous 'Madesnana', the practice of making the lower caste people lay down on the remaining of food eaten by upper caste people. He had in-depth knowledge and had translated many books from English to Kannada including the autobiography of A. K. Gopalan.

Comrade Madhava's death is a big loss to the CITU, its Karnataka state unit and AIBWF. CITU secretariat conveys its condolence to all his comrades and family members.

Issue Raised in Rajya Sabha

Kerala Govt. Wants to Operate Thiruvananthapuram Airport

NDA government decided to privatise 5 airports at Lucknow, Jaipur, Thiruvananthapuram, Mangalore and Ahmadabad and decided to hand over these airports to Adani Group. Raising the issue in Rajya Sabha during Zero Hour on 24 June, CPI(M) MP K. K. Ragesh said that LDF government in Kerala is willing to take over the Thiruvananthapuram airport. (*The Working Class; April, 2019*)

"It is regrettable that the state government is being considered on the same footing as the Adani Group," in the auction, he said. The land was given by the state government when the airport was established and, therefore, the State government shall have the first say in its operation.

He said that Kerala chief minister at the recent NITI Aayog meeting told the Prime Minister about this and sought his immediate intervention.

"National wealth is being privatised," he said. "Thiruvananthapuram is a profit-making airport. Why is this airport being given to the Adani Group," he asked.

WORKING CLASS

JULY 2019

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Establish Linkage and Expand

I

The recently held biggest political exercise of the country for the constitution of 17th Lok Sabha was totally an apolitical election.

The narrative was successfully changed - more so during the long drawn electoral process - from people's burning issues, anti-people policies and governance failures to overarching Hindu identity and utilizing communal and caste divisions.

The political rightward shift in capitalist world with country-specific neoliberal economic and divisive agenda – as designed by international finance capital – has another agenda i.e. systematically de-politicisation of the people. Corporate media is blaring unceasingly for this.

II

Workers, peasants and other toiling sections are alive with their burning issues as was seen during several *Kisan Marches* last year and 8-9 January successful countrywide workers general strike this year, which had workers and people's burning issues and 'Modi Government Hatao' as the core issues, with their massive participation.

Yet, the general election became totally apolitical. People burning issues and 'Modi Hatao' agenda had no takers. The trade union movement has to find answer to these apparently contradictory positions.

III

There is need to change from issue-basis linkage to organisational linkage with regular live contacts. These require urgent attention to organisations at all levels, more so of the unions who have the direct day to day link with the workers.

The situation also demands rapid consolidation and expansion through unions; and carrying messages - to unions' functionaries - to general workers - to their families and - to other sections of the people.

Desire is not sufficient. Implementation and their review are necessary to meet the challenges.

Modi Govt. 2

'Big Bang' Economic Reforms

"In the first 100 days of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second term, a slew of 'big-bang' economic reforms that should please foreign investors are likely to be pursued.

"The reforms will include changes in labour laws, privatisation moves and creation of land banks for new industrial development, said Rajiv Kumar, vice chairman of NITI Aayog...who reports directly to Modi.

"They (foreign investors) will have reasons to be happy. You will see a slew of reforms I can assure you of that. We are going to pretty much hit the ground running,' Kumar told Reuters in an interview." (*Reuter; 31 May, 2019*)

Big bang

"India's economic growth rate decelerated to a five-quarter low of 6.6% in the last three months of 2018, and is expected to fall further in the January-March quarter due to a sharp drop in consumption.

"We should (start with the banks)...There will be big bang, there will be 100 days action." (*Reuters; 31 May, 2019*)

Modi Govt. 2

'Big Bang' Economic Reforms

Privatisation

"India May Privatise or Shut 46 PSUs in Coming Months, Says NITI Aayog's Rajiv Kumar,"- (*Headline*)

"Kumar said that the government will focus on fully privatising or closing more than 42 state-controlled companies in the coming months. The government is even mulling lifting the foreign direct investment cap on Air India, the loss-making state-owned flagship carrier, to make it easier to sell.

Kumar also said that it could create an autonomous holding company that would control all state-owned firms and wouldn't be answerable to lots of different ministries. This would speed up decision making for asset sales, avoiding much of the central government's bureaucracy. (*Reuters; 31 May, 2019*)



'Privatisation or closure of 46 PSUs means closure and shutdown of thousands of ancillaries, with forward or backward linkage with those PSUs; and capture of huge land assets at their disposal by private corporates and real estate shirks, both foreign and domestic.

"The just sworn in government has come out with its fangs and claws to push through its destructive and de-industrialising project losing no time to satisfy the lust and greed of corporate lobby, both foreign and domestic.

"Working class movement must rise to the occasion and unitedly fight and resolutely resist." (*CITU general secretary Tapan Sen; 31 May, 2019*)

100 Years of Struggle & Sacrifice

50 Years of Fight for Unity of the Working Class

50 Years of CITU; the Challenges Ahead

A.K. Padmanabhan

30th May this year marks the beginning of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of CITU. Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was formed in its all India conference at Lenin Nagar in Kolkata. The Conference was called by an organizing committee consisting of a number of national leaders of the then AITUC.

To reorient the premier organisation of the Indian working class, this section of leaders had been conducting struggle within AITUC for more than one and half decades. 1960s saw intensified struggles of various sections of working people; severe attacks were going on against the workers. Despite the workers coming forward to struggle, the leadership was not for struggles and a path of collaboration was being practiced. It was against this collaborative policy, a section of leadership including - P. Ramamurti, B.T. Ranadive, Jyoti Basu and others - conducted the struggle within. When all efforts failed, the decision was taken to hold an all India conference.

In this Conference, held from 27 May 1970, representatives from all the sectors of industries and from all over the country participated. After intense discussions for four days, the decision to form a new central trade union was taken and the name "Centre of Indian Trade Unions (briefly as CITU) was decided. The new leadership was elected with B.T. Ranadive as President, P. Ramamurti as General Secretary and Kamal Sarkar as the Treasurer. The impact of the historic proceedings of this foundation conference will remain throughout the lives of all those who were present there and for me also, it will ever remain unforgettable.

The period when this crucial decision was taken was very critical for the Indian working class and all other sections of toiling masses. The fourth general elections to Indian parliament and the state legislations were held in 1967. For the first time, in 8 states non-Congress governments were formed. There were Left-led governments like in Kerala and West Bengal; and governments of parties of rightist policies in UP and Orissa and those, led by the regional parties, as in Tamilnadu and Bihar.

The post election period also saw wide spread struggles of the working people; workers as well as peasants and agricultural workers went on militant struggles in various parts of the country and terror was let loose against them. Political attacks were also unleashed against class oriented organizations and also against the Left-led governments in West Bengal and later in Kerala.

Within the ruling class parties also there were internal struggles which later on resulted in a big split in the Indian National Congress at national level.

While the Conference was being held in Kolkata, struggles were going on in various parts of West Bengal. Comrade Jyoti Basu was the Deputy Chief Minister of the two United Front governments in the state. Both the governments were dismissed within a short period after conspiratorial efforts of various groups and parties and of the Central government.

New enthusiasm

The news of the formation of a new central trade union and its call of "Unity and Struggle" enthused the struggling workers all over the country. CITU and its red flag with hammer and sickle and the four letters vertically inscribed on the side of the emblem began flying high whenever working people went on struggle.

CITU had called upon the Indian working class to strengthen its Unity and intensify the Class Struggle to end exploitation and for social transformation. This call had its own impact on the struggling workers.

Solidarity for the struggles of all sections came from others and Indian streets reverberated with the slogan of Unity and Struggle. Unity is for strengthening the struggles. This was stressed again and again by CITU. And to underline this, the first call of national level action from the Conference was a Unity Week, to be observed all over the country. Those who tried to ridicule this call by saying that those who broke the unity are calling for a Unity Week, could see the powerful impact of this call which emanated from Lenin Nagar in Kolkata.

CITU, emphasized that it will uphold class unity and class struggle and will fight against all sorts of collaborationist ideas. CITU also has a clear vision of the future of Indian society. This vision was spelt out in its constitution – *“The CITU believes that the exploitation of the working class can be ended only by socializing all means of production and exchange and establishing a socialist state. Holding fast the ideals of Socialism, the CITU stands for the complete emancipation of society from all exploitation”*. With this clear vision and determination to repel all attempts to take the working class along the path of class collaboration, CITU marched ahead facing all sorts of repressions and victimizations.

Last fifty years have seen the determination of the working people committed to the cause upheld by CITU, from its foundation conference. All out efforts were made to unify the working class of the country, notwithstanding the historical divisions in its ranks. The Central government itself, with the initiative of its labour minister, formed a National Council of Trade Unions (NCTU) to isolate CITU. But CITU, with its class orientation, took efforts to form an alternate platform – the United Council of Trade Unions (UCTU) with the organizations prepared to co-operate with CITU and also to intensify the struggles.

From that time onwards, CITU has been in the forefront of efforts to unify the working people and go on for struggles. In 1974, historic countrywide general strike of railway workers was held. A joint Committee - National Co-ordination Committee of Railwaymen’s Struggle (NCCRS) - was formed. Except INTUC, all other major central TUs were part of this committee. Various platforms like National Campaign Committee, Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions, National Platform of Mass Organizations and, after 2009, though without a specific name, joint platform of all the central trade unions and national federations could be formed and nationwide strikes and struggles were conducted.

With the first ever countrywide general strike on 19th January 1982, on a charter of demands of workers, peasants and agricultural workers, the countrywide strike actions had begun. 10 comrades, including peasants, agricultural workers and student were shot dead in various states on this day of action. Beginning with that, there were countrywide strikes, Marches to Delhi, picketing, courting arrest programmes at national level on various occasions.

Struggles against neoliberal policies

With the advent of neoliberal policies from 1991, CITU initiated steps for countrywide actions including strikes and the first strike was on 23rd November 1991. Various sectoral, countrywide and regional strikes were also held during this period. Employees of public sector undertakings, banks and insurance, transport, electricity, state and central governments; medical and sales representatives, scheme workers, various sectors unorganized workers, including construction, saw united struggles during this period. Though one or two central TUs walked in and out of the joint platform, the united movements against the policies of the government continued; and this year, on 8th and 9th January, more than 20 crore workers participated in the countrywide 48 hours general strike. This was the 18th countrywide strike after 1991.

The period after 1991, has been a period of sinister attacks on the hard won rights of the workers. In this period, when Indian trade unions have celebrated the 100 years of formal T.U. movement in the country (Madras Labour Union, the first formal trade union was formed in April 1918) even the right to form a trade union of the workers choice is under attack. Hundreds of workers are victimized just for their efforts to form a union. Even, when the government and employers talk of ‘excessive labour legislations’, mandatory recognition of trade unions and ensuring collective bargaining rights still continue to be a major demand in the charter of the Indian trade union movement.

CITU is entering its Golden Jubilee year, upholding the great traditions of the 100 years of Indian trade union movement. CITU remembers the workers and their leaders who laid down their lives for the cause of the freedom of the country, the unity and integrity of the country and for the cause of the rights of the workers. With these into consideration and the social, political and organizational responsibilities to fulfill the vision that was adopted 50 years ago, CITU has adopted the Golden Jubilee year slogans – “50 years of fight for class-unity; continuing the legacy of 100 years of struggles and sacrifices”.

CITU is fully aware that there is a long way to go and a lot of serious challenges have to be overcome. A lot of organizational weaknesses need to be rectified and already these have been identified and necessary tasks finalized.

Challenges ahead

While we begin the celebrations, a new government, again under the RSS-led BJP and its leader Narendra Modi is taking over, after the 17th general elections. CITU is well aware of the situation facing the Indian working class. While we raise the slogan of unity and struggle, the forces at the helm of affairs in the country has an agenda, just contrary to what we are trying to build up. Last five years saw three countrywide strikes and struggles of workers and employees. Peasants in the country were on struggle, creating a new wave of enthusiasm. The need of the hour is more united and far reaching struggles of all sections of working people and exploited sections.

Working class should be able to meet the ideological challenges that are thrown at them while strengthening the Unity and intensification of Class Struggles. Towards this, let us reach out to all the sections of working people, put before them the lofty ideals of an exploitation free India that we are working for, rectify all that we need to be so that the class unity is achieved. Let the one year celebration be a good beginning for these tasks to be accomplished.

Notice

CITU General Council Meeting

Hassan: August 7 - 10, 2019

Venue: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Bhavan, Harsha Mahal Road, Hassan

Note:

1. Venue: Approximately 1km from main bus stand & 2kms from railway station.
2. Contact persons on arrival at Hassan: Dharmesh – 09448220402; Naveen - 09448702074.
3. Travelling: Trains from Yeshwantpur in Bangalore to Hassan; Non-stop buses - from Bangalore to Hassan.
4. Accommodation: multiple; at walkable distance from the meeting venue. Separate accommodation on request can be arranged on bearing cost by the members coming with families.

For Assistance: Contact - S. Varalakshmi (9448087189), Meenakshi Sundaram (9448070267);

Email. : citukar@gmail.com

- Reception Committee

100 Years of Struggle & Sacrifice

50 Years of Fight for Unity of the Working Class

Struggle for Worker-Peasant Alliance

Hannan Mollah

Revolutionary Understanding of Workers-Peasants Alliance

October Revolution brought the lesson that in countries, coming late to capitalism, the newly emerging bourgeoisie was no longer capable of completing bourgeois revolution against feudal order the way, for instance, the bourgeois had done in French Revolution in 1789. This was because, in the new situation that confronted it, it was afraid that an attack on feudal property could well rebound into an attack on bourgeois property itself. It was therefore, tended to make compromise with the old feudal order which implied that the task of carrying forward the bourgeois revolution, and especially of freeing the peasantry from its feudal yoke, now fell upon the proletariat in these countries despite its relative small size and its belated appearance in the historical scene.

“This necessitated a worker peasant alliance under the leadership of the working class. But, such alliance having carried forward the bourgeois revolution against the feudal order, could not stop there. The working class having carried forward the bourgeois revolution, would obviously push on towards socialism in an uninterrupted revolutionary process during which, of course, the precise constituents of the worker-peasant alliance would keep changing.” This clear message was internalized by the Indian revolutionaries in their theoretical understanding and putting that into practice.

To proceed towards those tasks, it was necessary to organize the workers and peasants as class through their mass organizations which could lead them to build class struggle against the feudal landlord, colonial and capitalist exploitation. These struggles intertwined with the growing struggle against imperialism, raised the consciousness of the toiling masses of our country. The development of workers and peasants struggle, building over decades of patient efforts by thousands of revolutionary activists, passed through different phases with several successes and failure.

Early Peasants and Workers Struggles in Colonial India

India was a feudal country where vast majority of the population of the peasantry suffered exploitation by the landlords, money lenders and feudal gentry. There were innumerable struggle of the peasantry against such feudal exploitation. When British captured our country as their colony, against this dual exploitation there were several spontaneous upsurges of the peasantry. Many of those were armed resistance in different parts of the country. Some important struggles were Santhal Mutiny (1855-56) in the then Bihar, Mopla revolt of Malabar, Indigo revolt in Bengal etc. The spontaneous unrest of the peasantry erupted against landlords. The colonial ruler changed inland system in the country and intensified exploitation till the 1st World War.

After the War, the economic crisis intensified and major burden fell on the peasantry. The struggle spread against the exploitation in Punjab, Kerala, UP, Bengal, Bombay, Madras residency. This period also witnessed big working class action in textile and jute mills in

Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in northern and eastern railways, the coalfields of Jharia, P&T department of Bombay, plantation of Assam, tramways in Calcutta etc.

In Chauri Choura in UP, there was a big revolt against British Raj in which large number of peasants were involved. Later on, during the world economic crisis of 1929-30, the farmers also came under severe distress and many local struggles were organized. Those struggles were organized by local leaders and some nucleus of Kisan organization also emerged in different parts of the country.

Formation of AIKS and Building Workers-Peasants Alliance

Along with the freedom movement, the peasants' struggles were linked to them and national leadership also understood the need of organizing peasantry. But, while the rightwing leadership was not supporting the idea to organize peasants in a separate organization, the leftwing leaders of the Indian National Congress took initiative in this regard and, finally, in 1936 All India Kisan Sangh, later on All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), was formed during AICC session at Lucknow. The objective of the Kisan movement was to secure freedom from economic exploitation and the achievement of full economic and political power for the peasantry and workers and all other exploited classes. In its Gaya resolution, AIKS resolved, *"It is sacred duty of every one of our Kisan to fraternise with the workers in the village and towns. There is much to be achieved by both workers and peasantry by common effort for their mutual benefit."*

The acceptance of hammer and sickle in the flag of AIKS also cemented the idea of workers-peasants alliance. Since its formation, AIKS always tried to build that unity by extending support to the struggle of the workers in different times. The AIKS adopted the resolution in Faizpur session to observe May Day in 1938 as the part of exploited people of the country and resolved to strengthen *"peasants alliance to India's revolutionary struggle and their determination to achieve the Kisan Mazdoor Raj."*

The AIKS extended solidarity to working class and the AITUC in its struggle against capitalism and supported its charter of demands in its Comilla conference in 1938. Since then in all its sessions, AIKS took resolution of Worker-Peasants alliance and extended support to their struggle and build up united front between AIKS and AITUC. AIKS from its inception, decided to organize struggle for the agricultural workers as the rural working class.

The jute workers were fighting for decades for their rights. In their struggle Kisan Sabha always stood by them. They organized several joint struggles by Bengal Chatkal Mazdur Union and Krishak Samity on raw jute price, procurement of jute and the opening closed jute mills, against retrenchment of jute workers and their wage in a year were taken jointly and forced the jute mill owners to accede to their demands. The Kisan always fought for sugarcane price and also for the sugar mill workers. AIKS stood by the major struggle of the public sector employees, transport workers and cotton mill workers. There were all India general strikes by the working class and peasantry always joined them with great number against price rise, unemployment and atrocities.

Developing Working Class Movement

The modern working class emerged after the development of industries and factories. The cotton textile, jute textile industries were the pioneer of our industries and brought the workers into existence. Later on manufacturing industries also employed millions of workers. Along with these the transport, mining, PSUs, iron and steel, construction, plantation and many other industries developed during the colonial period and also after independence.

The workers movements also passed through different stages. Initially, the movements were spontaneous, unorganized, sporadic and led by some philanthropists in Kolkata, Bombay and Madras

etc. National movement initially did not take note of those growing unrest of the majority unorganized working class in 18th century and early 19th centuries. But, some organized efforts were seen in the early 19th century before the 1st World War. But, the War brought miseries in the life of emerging working class and their struggles were visible against capitalist exploitation. The strikes in Bombay, Kurla, Surat, Wardha, Ahmadabad were organised in increasing numbers and they were sporadic, localized and short lived. But those were the beginning of organized working class movement. In the context those movements it was needed a coordinated work which led to formation of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1920.

After getting a national framework, strikes of the workers increased many fold in next few years and state level organizations were built up. This phase of movement grew in strength till the independence of the country. The national leaders gradually took note of the growing strength of TU movement and working class. But, there was clear division in their approach. The rightwing leadership was not in favour of any militant struggles of the workers and they would prefer more peaceful negotiation with capitalists to get some benefits for the workers. But, the left oriented leadership took the path of more militant prolong struggle like the general strike, long time continuous strikes and militant demonstration etc. AITUC took the lead in such struggles. After independence, many national level trade union organizations emerged and those were mostly organized on party line. While Indian National Congress patronized INTUC, the Socialist parties built up HMS, Hindutwawadi force developed BMS and left forces tried to strengthen AITUC. Some more organizations came up in course of time. But through experience, working class movement understood the need of united struggles. Due to compromising tendencies in a section of AITUC leadership, the fighting section of its leadership built up CITU in 1970.

This year the working class is observing centenary of AITUC and golden jubilee of CITU. Working class organised trade unions mostly with organized sections of workers who are 7% of the total working class but 93% of working class belong to the unorganized sector. For long time they were neglected but since last few decades, the trade unions, especially CITU, started organizing this vast sections of unorganized labourers.

As India is vastly a semi feudal country, there are massive populations of peasantry. Among them, large sections are landless peasants, agricultural labourers or tenant peasants. The growing poverty among these sections and joblessness in rural India, forced them to migrate to the urban / city area. The vast sections of unorganised labourers are the migrated section of rural peasantry. So, our trade union movement started organising them who are the link between workers and peasants.

CITU, from its inception, took revolutionary position in organising the working class and to strengthen class struggle to change the correlation of class forces in our society. CITU is conscious about the need for worker-peasant alliance which is the key to the revolutionary transformation of capitalist-feudal exploitation based present social order. They are conscious about the leading role of working class in these struggles. CITU always extended support to the struggle of the peasantry and working for a firm worker-peasant alliance.

Extensive support to each others' struggle and through participation in those struggles only will create a confidence in each other and strengthen the process of worker-peasant unity. AIKS has taken the same position since its inception as mentioned earlier.

Workers and Peasants Movement in Post-Independent Period

In post independence phase, the workers and peasant movements passed through two stages - since independence to the advent of neo-liberal era; and post neo-liberalization period.

Immediately after independence, a massive repression was unleashed by the government against the peasant movement and their organizations. AIKS could not function properly for six years till 1953. Despite that, the peasantry organized resistance against the oppression of the landlords and massive eviction from land. The epoch making Telangana struggle challenged the government's

repression. In Punjab, struggle against betterment levy was widespread. The peasants played an important role in political change in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura helping formation of Left led governments and in the struggle for democracy and occupation of Benami land in West Bengal leading to Barga operation.

The trade union also led many struggles during this period. From 1947 to 1960, many new industries set up and PSUs also established and some benefits were accrued to workers. But, in sixties, situation deteriorated due to massive inflation, the real wage of workers declined. There were massive increases of working class resistance. In 1964 there were 2151 industrial disputes involving more than a million workers. Those struggles continued against the capitalists in the country. The emergency announced by Indira Gandhi intensified the attacks on working class rights and struggles. The capitalist renewed their attacks on workers and organized lockouts in massive scale. The working class responded in a large way against those attacks. The longest railway strike occurred in the country in 1974. Later on, sickness of industries increased and the working class faced serious economic offensive from the capitalists. All India Kisan Sabha extended full support to those growing struggles of the working class.

Post liberalization period brought major crisis in the life of workers and peasants. The de-industrialisation led to joblessness and intensified unemployment problems. The labour laws were being abolished or amended to suit corporate industries. The casualisation caused insecurity in the life of the workers.

The same was the fate of our peasantry. This reduced the agricultural growth and farmers were not getting remunerative price for their products whereas the cost of production increased many fold. Due to acute indebtedness, farmers suicide became the order of the day. The farming became a loss making venture. The agriculture policy was anti-peasants, anti agricultural labourer and pro-corporate.

In the face of such attacks, there was upsurge of struggles of the workers and peasants and there was more and more united struggles in different parts of the country. There were series of workers general strikes and two all India *Bharat Bandhs* organized in which 20 crores of workers participated and cores of peasants joined them in the form of rural bandh, *rasta roko* and rallies.

Worker-Peasant Alliance

Increasing independent as well as united struggles of the workers and peasants paved the way for worker-peasant alliance which is our strategic goal. The trade unions, Kisan Sabha and agricultural workers' union were coming closer for united discussion, consultation and planning for joint struggle which would help coming closer to each other. In 1982, on 19th January, there was the first Bharat Bandh in the country and in that struggles, all these organizations jointly worked to make it success. There were great enthusiasm among these sections of the people and they participated jointly in a big way. The government unleashed barbaric attacks on the strikes in different parts of the country. In Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other states, there were police firing that killed ten persons - they were workers, peasants and agricultural workers. By shedding blood together the message of worker-peasant unity was written. That historical united sacrifice helped to work for broader unity among the toiling masses. The CITU, AIKS and AIAWU have jointly been observing the day as Worker-Peasant Unity Day and, it is being observed, in more in number and places every year. Besides, the struggles of Anganwadi workers, Asha workers and Mid-day meal workers intensified and Kisan Sabha and agricultural workers union have been extending support to them. In last two general All India Strikes by the workers, the AIKS and AIAWU took part in a big way and organized rural bandh along with workers general strike.

These three organizations of the toiling masses, built in close coordination at the national level, jointly asked their state units to form state level coordination committees and plan state and district level united struggles. Recently, that united action created lots of enthusiasm among the activists on all three

organizations. The AIKS organized a *Jail Bhara* movement on Kisan Sabha demands and CITU supported the struggle. This created great impact and lakhs of peasants and workers participated in more than 500 places. In some places workers were more than peasants.

This showed the urge of united struggle at grass root level. This most historical successful struggle was followed by a central rally in Delhi on 5 September 2018. CITU called for the rally and AIKS and AIAWU joined it and drew massive crowd in Delhi, which was the biggest ever worker peasant rally in the country.

Tasks Ahead

The worker-peasant alliance is a historical political front for conducting a successful worker-peasant revolution in the country. This alliance, led by the working class, is the most effective instruments for changing the exploitation-based social order to a society, free from exploitation of man by man. The socialism is the ultimate goal for establishment of most civilized, most humane and exploitation free social order. In our country, the toiling masses are engaged in the long and difficult anti-feudal anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist struggle to achieve the above goal. The worker-peasant alliance should be built to make that struggle a success. This is a class front based on class struggle and these two basic classes to be united under the leadership of the working class. As a main component of that force, workers and peasants organisations should work tirelessly.

Modi Govt. 2

‘Big Bang’ Economic Reforms

Labour Laws

“Kumar said that reforms in India’s complicated labour laws will see the light of day as early as the next parliamentary session in July, when the government will place a new bill before the lower house for approval.

“It will aim to combine 44 central laws into four codes – wages, industrial relations, social security and welfare, and the fourth – occupational safety, health and working conditions.

“This should help companies avoid getting embroiled in a series of complicated disputes with their workers and officials that involve regulations set by authorities at different levels of government and can lead to long, drawn-out adjudication in various parts of the legal system.” (*Reuter; 31 May, 2019*)

Modi Govt. 2

‘Big Bang’ Economic Reforms

Land

“The government could also offer swathes of land to foreign investors from the land banks it plans to create from unutilised land controlled by public sector enterprises, Kumar said. ‘What could be attempted is to build an inventory of government land that can then be offered to foreign investors,’ Kumar said.

“Getting access to some of the large amounts of unutilised Indian government land would reduce major risks for foreign companies as there would be a lot less risk of legal challenges over ownership and development. A lot of the sites they have used in the past was previously farmland, opening them up to protests and court action by local communities over land rights, the environment and other issues.” (*Reuter; 31 May, 2019*)

100 Years of Struggle & Sacrifice

50 Years of Fight for Unity of the Working Class

Saga of Unity & Struggle of Petroleum Workers

SwadeshDevRoye

At the time CITU's foundation, its activities among petroleum sector workers were limited. CITU's affiliated and its friendly unions in oil and petroleum sector existed in Eastern and North-Eastern regions of the country by and large. However, quite obviously, our main base was in West Bengal and Tripura.

The first initiative to coordinate, at national level, the activities of CITU affiliated unions in petroleum sector was taken in the year 1989. On the sideline of CITU General Council meeting, held at Dhanbad, a meeting of the comrades from oil sector trade unions was held on 28 September 1988 which decided to have a broader all India meeting of the CITU affiliated and the friendly unions in oil sector.

Accordingly, an all India broad-based meeting was held on 23 April 1989 at Yuva Kendra, Kolkata. Apart from West Bengal, representatives from unions in Assam, Tripura, UP, Bihar and Southern states participated in the meeting. From CITU centre M. K. Pandhe, Jibon Roy and SwadeshDevRoye attended the meeting.

National Coordination Committee of Oil & Petroleum Workers

Subsequently, as was decided in that broad based meeting at Kolkata, a meeting of the unions in oil sector was held at CITU centre in New Delhi and an all India coordination committee of oil & petroleum workers was formed as National Coordination Committee (NCC) of Oil & Petroleum Workers, electing SwadeshDevRoye as its convener, which started functioning since 1990 and continued for a period of around 15 years; and accomplished its desired task of organising and forming our Petroleum & Gas Workers' Federation of India (PGWFI) on 15 November 2005 at Haldia.

Some of the other landmark activities of the NCC of Oil & Petroleum Workers are noted below.

National Seminar on Self-Reliance on Oil & Natural Gas

With the beginning of the neo-liberal attack of liberalization, opening up and privatization of oil & natural gas CPSUs, the NCC, under the guidance of CITU centre, successfully mobilized the INTUC and the AITUC federations for joint initiative on defending self reliance. Accordingly, a 'National Seminar on Self-Reliance on Oil and Natural Gas' was jointly organized in New Delhi on 1-2 September 1993. An advisory council was constituted with M. K. Pandhe, Raja Kulkarni, Y.D. Sharma, K. Ashok Rao and M.P. Parameswaran. SwadeshDevRoye was entrusted the task of the Seminar Coordinator.

Chittabrata Majumdar participated in the seminar with a team of comrades from West Bengal with expertise in the industry who presented papers on various topics. The seminar was a grand success. Trade unions of all affiliations, representing all major oil PSUs, participated in the seminar. A seminar of such dimension was organized for the first time in the country. All the participants highly appreciated the realisation of such important forum.

National United Forum against Privatisation of Oil PSUs

In March, 2002 the then NDA government at the centre had decided to completely privatize the total marketing divisions of BPCL and HPCL and handover the entire established retail network to Mukesh Ambani's RIL. Various steps had already been taken by the government and the management of both the oil PSUs. At

this stage CITU took the foremost initiative and successfully united all the unions of both the oil PSUs and launched the National United Forum.

The foundation of the Unity Forum was laid down in the first meeting, held in the BPCL central office complex premises in Mumbai on 01.11.2002, which was attended by the representatives of four trade unions from the BPCL refinery, Mumbai and four marketing trade unions of BPCL, Mumbai. SwadeshDevRoye and Tarapada Roy Choudhury attended and guided the meeting. This meeting decided to convene a bigger all India meeting of the trade unions of BPCL, HPCL, KRL, NRL & MRL at the BPCL refinery auditorium complex, Mumbai. Accordingly a meeting took place on 19 November, 2002 at the BPCL Refinery Sports Complex, Mumbai.

This meeting was attended by around 70 delegates from all over the country representing the 17 trade unions from the refineries and marketing operations of BPCL, HPCL, KRL & NRL. This meeting adopted programmes of struggles and also gave a call of strike to oppose the decision of the government to privatize BPCL and HPCL. The National United Forum against Privatisation of Oil PSUs was formally launched from this meeting. During 1 November, 2002 - 27 February, 2003 several meetings of representatives of unions were held, attended by more number of unions in successive meetings. Following these, several conventions at different locations continued up to February 2003.

On 27 February, 2003, in a joint convention at the BTR Bhavan in New Delhi, decision was taken on 3 days strike on 25 - 27 March 2003 in BPCL and HPCL. 26 participating unions from BPCL and HPCL signed the strike notice. The success of the convention and strike decision created commotion particularly among the trade union movement in oil PSUs.

The reverberating success of the 3 days countrywide strike in BPCL and HPCL opened up the horizon for involving the trade unions of ONGC, IOC and other oil PSUs in the joint struggle against privatization. Now, with joining of the unions of IOC, ONGC and others, the next higher phase was launched, again from Mumbai in a joint extended all India meeting of the representatives of the unions held on 27 April, 2003. Two more conventions were held at Kolkata and Delhi on 1 June and 28 September, 2003 respectively.

The peak of the phase was witnessed in the national convention, held at the premises of IOC refinery at Noonmati, Guwahati on 16 November 2003. Unforgettable history was created in this convention. A record number of 70 unions of regular workers and contract workers from practically the entire oil and natural gas PSUs sector participated in the convention. Befitting to the unshakable conviction for struggles, the convention decided to observe nationwide strike on 16 December 2003. The country never witnessed such total strike in the oil sector in the past and that too, jointly by regular workers and contract workers.

It is on record that the then Chairman and Managing Director of IOC in his address to the annual general meeting of the shareholders of the company for the financial year 2003-2004 mentioned that if the strike would not have been observed, the marketing division of IOC would have been hived off and privatized. No further elaboration is needed.

Protest against government's move to privatise oil PSUs has been the major enabling factor in forging the widest ever mighty unity of the petroleum workers of the country cutting across all affiliations and jurisdictional barriers. Again, we have experienced that simultaneously with the heightening of the struggle the unity also got broadened. The message is clear - unity is better achieved in the process of struggle.

Participation in World Conference of Oil & Natural Gas Workers in Paris

Today's strong international fraternal network of CITU and for that matter PGWFI has its origin with the World Conference of Oil & Petroleum Workers jointly hosted by FNIC-CGT France, OCI Union of Mediterranean, Libya and IEMO, Paris was held in Paris on 18-20 October, 1999. From India the only delegation was from CITU consisting of Comrades SwadeshDevRoye, T.S. Rangarajan and Swapan Mitra. 140 Delegates from 36 countries attended the conference.

This conference really gave huge exposure to us before the world oil & petroleum trade union movement. We may mention with humility that the paper we presented was highly appreciated and recognized by the conference by incorporating our nominee to the 'Declaration Drafting Committee' of the conference. More so as per decision of the centre secretariat of CITU we extended invitation to host the next world conference which was obviously applauded by the conference.

2nd World Conference of Oil, Gas and Refining Trade Unions in India

As a follow-up of the Paris conference, the 2nd World Conference of Oil & Petroleum Workers was held in Kolkata on 8-10 March 2003. This was a landmark event of oil & petroleum workers organized by us. The conference achieved resounding success in all aspects.

The organizational credibility we achieved nationally and internationally from the conference was of the tallest order. And we should not miss to note that the quality of the conference in the matters of presentation of documents, deliberations and declaration adopted was appreciated by the participants from the country and abroad alike. 124 delegates from India and abroad participated in the conference. Jyoti Basu, the then Union Oil & Natural Gas minister Ram Naik and number of CITU secretariat members including the president and the general secretary attended the conference.

The Foundation Conference of PGWFI

The foundation conference of Petroleum & Gas Workers' Federation of India (PGWFI) was held at Haldia on 14-15 November 2005. Around 200 delegates representing 52 unions of both regular and contract workers from production, refining, marketing and other activities of oil sector participated in the conference. 19 fraternal delegates from abroad (Britain, France, Russia, Egypt, Greece, Libya, Tunisia and Bangladesh) also participated in the conference. Some of the most significant formulations of the report of the Convener to the conference are paraphrased below:

"An in-depth analysis will clearly show that the Federation being launched from this conference shall have the distinction of being the biggest apex organization of the petroleum and gas workers of the country. The Federation would constitutionally represent number of trade union streams and hence truly the 'Prayag' of Petroleum and Gas Workers of India. All the oil PSUs, all the regions of the country, all the segments of activities of the petroleum industry are being represented in the Federation. The Federation affiliates together would command the support of majority workers in the different respective oil PSUs and of course in its totality in the entire oil PSUs. Largest number of recognized unions in the entire industry would be with the Federation."

No other Federation has been launched in course of a conference of this magnitude. Each aspect of the conference has been taken care of with utmost seriousness, decency and discipline. The presence of so many fraternal delegates from abroad in the foundation conference of any Federation is also unprecedented.

All these big parameters in the Federation are a matter to rejoice and at the same time endow responsibility as well. Let the Federation take off with the collective understanding and reverberating resolve: 'Biggest Federation – Highest Responsibility'.

The Message and the Task

Today's Petroleum and Gas Workers' Federation of India (PGWFI) consisting of unions affiliated to CITU plus the independent trade unions, is the result of long 15 years of struggle. The National United Forum against Privatisation of Oil PSUs acted as a piece of magnet which attracted the independent unions to join our united federation i.e., PGWFI. It is important to note that our presence in Mumbai is note-worthy. Our dominant position in the Eastern and North-Eastern regions continues. Our international activities have been expanding. We have been regularly sending delegation to various world trade union events.

Precisely our Federation has really emerged from the successful united struggle against the then government's move to privatise BPCL and HPCL marketing divisions. However, meanwhile, attack of privatisation of public sector in general and petroleum PSUs in particular has reached at worst level.

The depth of destruction of public sector inflicted by Narendra Modi led NDA government during their last tenure has well surpassed the record of the past 24 years of neo-liberal era. Modi government has collected the highest amount by privatisation of CPSUs through different methods and degrees. From 1991 to January 2019, the total privatisation proceeds is Rs.3,84,293.79 crore of which Modi government alone has collected 60.24%.

In coming days, attack of PSU privatisation by Modi government shall call upon us to "Protest and Protect or Perish". To live up to their achievements of the period before the launch of the Federation captured above, the PGWFI must re-invigorate the already tested fighting capability of the petroleum workers to unleash total organisational initiative to meet the challenge of the time.

Stop Privatisation of Indian Railways

CITU strongly opposed privatisation move of Modi-2 government designed in the 100 days Action Plan of its ministry of railways. The Railway Board has already directed rail administration to take up the proposals immediately for implementation of the Plan by 31 August 2019.

The Action Plan proposes to hand over 2 passenger trains' operation to IRCTC as a route to privatisation. These trains will run on the important routes and connecting major cities.

The Government is also attempting to float tenders within 4 months to hand over the premier trains, including Rajdhani and Shatabdi, to private operators.

Action Plan also proposes corporatisation of 7 production units of Indian railways, including the associated workshops, in the 'Indian Railway Rolling Stock Company' to be floated soon. This is a route to outsource production to the private players killing public sector's indigenous manufacturing capacity, CITU said.

The government has also decided on hiking rail fares, on the plea of withdrawing subsidies, to make it a profitable business enterprise for the private operators withdrawing it from Government's services list.

Overwhelming majority of the railway passengers are poor and belong to low income group. "Providing cheap and affordable travel is the Constitutional responsibility of the government" to its citizens, CITU said in its statement on 21 June. "The government who has come to power with the votes of the common people and the poor, has, within less than a month, started imposing burdens on the common people, just to pay back their bosses, the big corporates, domestic and foreign", the statement said.

"The proposal to consult the trade unions is only an eye wash. Till today, the Modi government, in its earlier avatar as well as since it returned to power, has blatantly been ignoring the voices of the trade unions on many issues. In fact all the central trade unions have been consistently opposing privatisation of the public sector undertakings."

CITU called upon the people and all its affiliated unions and federations to oppose the privatisation of the cheapest mode of transport available today for the people and unitedly resist the move. It also called upon all the unions of the railway employees to strongly oppose the privatisation of Indian railways in any form and mobilise their entire strength through united actions to stop such disastrous measures.

ILO joins hands with Modi Government to reduce workers minimum wage

J. S. Majumdar

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

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

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

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

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

It will not be out of place to note that, while the workers in India this year are celebrating centenary of the first all India trade union centre and golden jubilee of CITU commemorating the struggles and sacrifices pursuing immediate demands, for advancement and for revolutionary social transformation to end class exploitation; ILO is also celebrating the centenary of its formation, within two years after the

Great October Revolution by the working class and establishment of the first socialist state; as an alternative instrument for the labour for continuation and stability of class division and exploitation.

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

Deception route to cut minimum wage

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

Current Methodology

Under Directive Principles of the Constitution of India and on the basis of Fair Wages Committee recommendations; the tripartite 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) in 1957 decided on the Current Methodology of calculation having - (i) Workers family of 3 members consumption unit; (ii) 2700 calories per unit in balanced food as per Dr. Aykroyd formula; (iii) 72 yards of cloth per family per annum; (iv) House rent as charged by the government for low income group housing; and (v) additional 20% of (ii)+(iii)+(iv) for fuel, lighting and other miscellaneous expenses.

The Supreme Court of India has approved this Current Methodology in their judgement in Raptakos Brett case in 1992, but by adding one more criterion as (vi) Additional 25% to the total of (ii)+(iii)+(iv)+(v) for children's education, medical treatment, recreation, festivals and ceremonies. Thus, the total of (ii)+(iii)+(iv)+(v)+(vi) becomes the minimum wage.

"Innovative Methodology" of Government – ILO

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

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

What were the innovative methods which the Expert Committee used to cut workers minimum wages by about half (?) - (i) First, by reducing per day per consumption unit calorie intake from 2700 to 2400; (ii) Second, by taking very low prices of the food items; (iii) Third, by removing 20% of total wage for fuel, light and on miscellaneous expenses and 25% of the total as per Supreme Court judgement as in the Current Methodology and (iv) by replacing all non-food expenditures, including house rent, - as in

(iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) in the Current Methodology - into two broad categories as (a) Essential Non-Food Items, including house rent, and (b) Non-Food Items; and then calculating the expenses on these using empirical methods and on presumptions.

Minimum wage before the Supreme Court

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

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

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

Design to implement Code on Wages

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

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

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

US Threatens India to Surrender to its Dictates

US State Secretary Pompeo is visiting India on 25-26 June with the stated purpose to push India to further open its economy and drop the trade barriers; and to sell US defence equipment to India.

This visit comes immediately after US withdrawing India from being beneficiary under the GSP trade programme; and threatening India to stop purchasing oil from Iran and Venezuela.

Instead of resisting the arm-twisting of the US, BJP-led NDA government is succumbing to its pressure. Any surrendering to US at the cost of India's sovereignty, self-respect and people's interests are unacceptable said 5 Left parties – CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) Liberation, AIFB and RSP - in a joint statement on 20 June calling upon the people to oppose the BJP government's surrender of Indian interests before the US and to firmly demand of the government to pursue an independent policy which zealously secures our national interest.

STATES

West Bengal

Activities Report

17th Lok Sabha Election

In West Bengal, 17th Lok Sabha election was held in 7 phases during 11 April - 19 May, 2019. Immediately after declaration of the election schedule, CITU state council meeting, held on 11 March, gave call to defeat BJP and TMC and to support the Left front candidates. The meeting also decided to stand beside the people of Kashmir staying in the state and, if required, they will be given shelter in the houses of the CITU comrades as they were under attack by BJP/RSS and their outfits across the country following the terrorist attack in Kashmir.

Spiraling price rise, galloping unemployment, attack on democracy and democratic structure, attack on the lives and livelihood of the common people, demand of Rs.18000 as minimum wage and Rs.6000 as pension to all, MSP and loan waiver for the peasants, and obviously the pernicious agenda of communal polarization by BJP and Modi government; and attack on democracy, criminalization, corruption of the ruling party and its leaders and competitive communalism in the State; were the main issues in the campaign.

In industrial areas gate meetings, mohalla meetings, unions GB meetings in districts were held in tea, jute, transport, electricity, engineering, pharmaceuticals, scheme workers and in many other industries and also among unorganized sector workers. 5000 copies of booklet on "Talking Points" for the districts and of unions leadership for campaign; 4.38 lakh posters and 9.62 handbills/pamphlets in Bengali and Hindi were printed and distributed; and 60,000 copies of special news bulletin in Bengali were brought out besides hundreds of hoardings, banners, festoons, flex prepared locally constituency-wise by the district committees and unions. In addition for preparatory campaign for May Day, the leaflets and posters, printed and distributed by districts and unions, also gave call to defeat BJP and TMC and support the Left candidates.

8 Left candidates in last Parliament election and 2 LF candidates in Assembly by-election were from CITU. But despite our best efforts, no Left candidate could win from the State in the backdrop of sharp communal polarization, designed by BJP and the competitive communalism by TMC; unprecedented use of money and muscle power by both BJP and TMC; and violence. The situation will be discussed later after getting detailed inputs from districts and unions.

May Day 2019 Celebration

May Day 2019 was celebrated throughout the state with zest and fervor. After hoisting CITU flag, May Day meetings were held and rallies were brought out in districts. In Kolkata, flag was hoisted at CITU state centre, attended by leaders and members. In the afternoon, 10,000 strong workers rally and public meeting was held at Sahid Minar Maidan, jointly by the central trade unions addressed by CITU all India general secretary Tapan Sen as its main speaker.

Joint Trade Union Convention

On 4 June, an open convention was held at Esplanade jointly organised by CITU, INTUC, HMS and other Left-led trade unions, except AIUTUC and BMS, to protest against Modi government – 2 declaring their

neoliberal road map by disinvestment of 46 PSUs, revision of the labour laws, land grabbing and by other formidable designs. District-wise such joint conventions and rallies are scheduled in June in front district magistrates' offices and submitting memoranda and sending protest letters to the prime minister, union labour minister and the minister of industries. It is decided to hold such joint at union level.

Tripura

Activities Report

Shankar Prasad Datta

17th General Election

Soon after installation of BJP-IPFT government in Tripura, the state has been witnessing rapid deterioration of law and order situation. Looting, arson, ransacking of houses and shops, garden, paddy fields have become regular phenomena. Hundreds of left supporters, workers, leaders were severely beaten and driven away from their places. For the last 13 months that is the picture. The deterioration has gone to the extent that the police administration is refusing to file any FIR against the goons of the ruling party.

In such a backdrop, 17th General Election was held. CITU took the election as a course of mass struggle. Despite terror, the activists jumped in electoral activities throughout the state trying to organise rallies, meetings etc. As against that, Central government machineries coupled with state sponsored hooligans unleashed attack upon the Left forces. On the day of the first poll on 11 April, BJP-led miscreants captured more than fifty percent of the booths and rigged the election. They forcibly drove away voters, polling agents. In some places, voters were kept confined in houses. Situation was such that the Election Commission had to defer the second phase election for Tripura East (ST) constituency and removed ADG who was responsible for the law and order. There was demand to countermand the first phase election, but the Election Commission ordered to re-poll only in 168 booths and changed the R.O. of that constituency.

During the Left Front regime, elections were held in a festive mood. This time, even among ruling supporters, it was a nightmare. Thus BJP won both the seats stamping all democratic norms.

Attack has been intensified after the poll result was declared on 23 May. CPI(M) PBM and Leader of the Opposition Manik Sarkar led a team and met the chief minister to stop such anarchy. Though, he assured by the CM of taking steps, yet there is no sign to stop the state sponsored hooliganism.

In this background, movement of working class will take some more time to be united, but shall definitely be united as there is no alternative to it.

CITU State Organisational Situation

It is known to all that the State of Tripura is reeling under severe attack, specially the working class. Most of the CITU offices in different subdivisions were either demolished or forcibly captured by the BMS or Unnayan Manch. Normal activities are being extremely hard to reach to the working class. Under this abnormal situation, CITU state committee is trying utmost to complete membership and, up till now, 57,000 membership returns and affiliation could be sent.

Observing May Day 2019

May Day 2019 was observed throughout the State despite the panic-stricken atmosphere unleashed by the BJP-IPFT combine. In the state headquarters Agartala, massive mobilisation was organised in front of Rabindra Shatabarshiki Bhavan. The meeting was addressed by Manik Sarkar, the leader of the Opposition of Tripura State Assembly. He pointed out about the planned attack on all sections of the people of the country by the BJP-RSS and their allies. The aim of the ruling party is to serve only the corporate and their foreign friends. As a result their attack will directly hit the working class most along with other section of the people. It is,

therefore, the duties and tasks of the working class in particular to organised other sections of the society to resist this draconian attack and to orient a new social order in the country.

The meeting was also addressed by Manik Dey, state president of CITU, Sankar Prasad Datta, General Secretary and Jaya Barman. (*Shankar Prasad Datta, is CITU Tripura state general secretary*)

Delhi

Protest before Bihar Bhavan against Children's Death

Delhi state units of AIDWA, CITU, DYFI, SFI and DSMM staged a joint protest demonstration at Bihar Bhavan in New Delhi on 18 June against complete failure of BJP-JD(U) government in Bihar in preventing the recent deaths of 107 children in the hospitals, more unaccounted at homes, at Muzaffarpur due to Encephalitis epidemic. These show acute infrastructural deficiencies in government hospitals and lackadaisical attitude of the government in preventing the epidemic.

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

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

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

Odisha

CITU Leader Wins Assembly Election

Odisha state vice president of CITU, Laxman Munda, has been elected as CPI(M) candidate in the Odisha State Assembly election which took place simultaneously with 17th Lok Sabha election in April – May, 2019.

This is the third time Laxman Munda has been elected from Bonai (ST) seat in Sundargarh district. This tribal dominant district has rich mineral resources and large concentration of workers in iron ore and other mines and Rourkela steel plant.

The constituency has 94.33% rural and 5.67% urban population, 67.79% of them are STs. Laxan Munda is the undisputed leader among the of mines workers, mostly Adivasis, having large number of women workers, who are all members of CITU. Under the leadership of Laxman Munda, CITU led several successful struggles on workers issues, workers-peasants united struggles for the developmental work in the constituency and for employment.

Laxman Munda has defeated his nearest rival, the ruling Navin Patnaik's party, BJD candidate with much bigger margin of votes - from 1,818 in 1914 to over 12,000 in 2019. BJP candidate was a distant third. Lxaman Munda also increased his votes tally to 59,939 (34.69%) in 2019 from 39,125 (23.98%), an increase of more than 20,000 and 10% plus. (*Inputs: Ramesh Jena*)

INTERNATIONAL

108th International Labour Conference

Geneva; 10 - 21 June 2019

[On behalf of CITU, its National Secretary E. Kareem is attending this conference; Ed]

From the Speech of

WFTU General Secretary George Mavrikos

100 years since the founding of the ILO have been completed this year, and this is an opportunity to make an objective evaluation from the perspective of the World Working Class, to draw the true conclusions from the side of the militant trade union movement, to assess the results.

We believe that the ILO history is divided into two main periods - from its foundation until 1990 and from 1990 until today.

I

In the first period, it played a positive role in general and often worked as a mechanism of protection of workers' rights. The international correlations benefited and supported the role of the ILO, with the decisive role of the Soviet Union, of the People's Republic of China, of many other socialist countries and of the non-aligned countries' movement. Those favorable correlations had an important ally by their side - the militant trade union movement with the leading role, at that time, of the World Federation of Trade Unions. They had by their side the great class struggles of all workers.

The successes in establishing remarkable achievements such as: collective bargaining agreements, social security, social expenditure, improved salaries and working conditions of the working women, working time, wage increase, progress of democratic and trade union freedoms were the results of these circumstances. Trade unions were established in every corner of the planet. No matter how much ink is being spilled by modern slanderers, the truth will always shine.

II

Following the 1989-1991 overthrows and the changes that took place, the situation and role of the ILO, as well as of all international organizations, also changed. Before 1990, employers did not want to hear about the ILO. Now they consider it their ally and friend. Why?

The truth is at the workplaces where workers suffer from state violence and authoritarianism, from unemployment and lay-offs, from black labour, from privatizations, from poverty and capitalist barbarity. The truth lies in the Mediterranean Sea, where mothers and children are being drowned in their effort to escape imperialist aggression. This picture is also a result of the role played by the ILO and of the current situation within the leaderships of the trade union movement.

Since 1960 the blockade against Cuba continues; what did the International Organizations do? In Soma, Turkey, on 13 May 2014, 301 workers were killed; what did the International Organizations do? In the Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh on 24 April, 2013, 1,132 girls and women were murdered; what did the ILO do? In Colombia, over the last three years, 600 trade union militants have been murdered; who was punished for these crimes? In Chile the government undermines with anti-democratic methods the independent functioning of the CAT; what did the responsible office of the ILO do? What have the International Organizations

done to protect the workers of Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen from the imperialists? Only words. This is the picture.

Today, heads of states come here and tell us that black is white. Mr Macron, who attacks and beats the protesters, who fires 1000 workers from Centrale à charbon de Gardanne, whose Member of the Parliament from his party, Mr. Mohamed Laqhila, threatens to close the functioning of the trade union centre of UD CGT 13, came here a few days ago and presented us a false reality. Both, Mr Macron and Mrs Merkel, see the ILO today as an ideological mechanism in favor of their policies. This is the truth. This is the real picture. At the same time, they strengthen the phenomena of neo-fascism and xenophobia with their anti-workers policies.

III

Only by today's workers this picture can and must be changed with their united class-oriented struggles, by strengthening the unions at the base, by enhancing trade union democracy. The hope lies in our struggles.

ILO supported political right-wingers; Opposed workers wage increase in Venezuela

J. S. Majumdar

International Labour Organisation (ILO) became a part of the Modi government appointed so called 'Expert Committee' deciding on the methodology of calculation and fixing national minimum wage in India. It conveniently ignored all existing tripartite forums and existing laws including the Supreme Court's judgement.

It is the 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) which decided on the method of calculation of minimum wages which the Supreme Court approved giving it a legal foundation and implemented by the 7th Central Pay Commission and tripartite Minimum Wage Advisory Boards constituted under Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

The Government-ILO 'Expert Committee' submitted its report in January and the Government published it on 14 February, 2019 just prior to the 17th General Election for obvious political purpose. ILO got itself involved in the pre-election political campaign in favour of the ruling party in India.

But, the same ILO instituted an 'Enquiry Committee' on 21 March, 2018, just prior to 20 May 2018 presidential election in Venezuela, condemning Maduro government on so called allegations of failing to comply with ILO conventions on 'freedom of association', 'tripartite consultation' and for unilaterally 'increasing workers minimum wages'. It was ILO's involvement on pre-election political issue in favour of opponents of Maduro government.

ILO specifically mentioned about the complaint that "*alleges attacks, harassment, aggression and a campaign to discredit the employers' organisation – 'Fedecamaras' – its leaders and affiliates*", the ILO statement said. It also alleged a lack of consultation with Fedecamaras on laws and the adoption of "*numerous increases to the minimum wage without consultation with employer and worker representatives*", reports Reuter.

In response, Venezuela's deputy labour minister, Jose Ramon Rivero, told the ILO, "*We categorically express our disagreement to a commission of inquiry against our government*" and "*We regret that 'Fedecamaras' spokespeople are plotting, alongside an undemocratic wing of our country's opposition to sabotage the municipal, regional and presidential elections on May 20.*"

'Fedecámaras' (Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Production) is its main business association. It is in political odds since former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. During a failed coup d'état against Chavez in April 2002, former Fedecámaras president Pedro Carmona assumed the role of the President of Venezuela for two days.

President Nicholas Maduro, the former bus driver and who proudly says that he is worker-president, was re-elected with overwhelming 67.84 percent of votes in 20 May, 2018 election despite ILO's political intervention and setting up an enquiry commission, just before the election, on the allegations of 'Fedecámaras'.

Within less than a year after election, rightwing conspirators attempted a coup d'état in Venezuela on 23 January 2019, when Juan Gerardo Guaidó, president of the Venezuelan national assembly (now defunct), proclaimed and designated himself "Acting President" of the Bolivarian Republic obviously with full support of 'Fedecámaras' and US led world rightwing conspirators.

Several trade union organisations and others of social movement in different parts of the world, including CITU and all Left-led trade unions in India, denounced the attempted coup and Guaidó proclaiming himself as the "Acting President" of Venezuela.

Modi Govt. 2

Rs.8.000 - Rs.10,000 crore Annual Bonanza to Corporates

Immediately assuming power second time, Modi government conferred estimated Rs.8,000 to Rs.10,000 crore bonanza to the corporates from the ESIC account.

Employees' State Insurance (ESI) is a self-financing social security and health insurance scheme for, at present, about 3.6 crore workers employed in 12.8 lakh industrial establishments and managed by the tripartite Employees' State Insurance Corporation created by the ESI Act 1948.

The Union labour ministry in a statement on 13 June announced reduction of ESI contribution from employers from present 4.75% to 3.25%, a straightway reduction of 1.5% benefitting the corporates by Rs.8000 to Rs.10000 crore annually.

In a statement on 14 June, CITU denounced this *unilateral and arbitrary* decision of the government in gross violation of the decision of the tripartite Governing Body of ESI who, in its meeting on 18 September 2018, unanimously decided to revise the ESI contribution reducing it from 4.75% to 4% for the employers and from 1.75% to 1% for the workers (0.75% from each) making it total 5% annually. Accordingly, Gazette notification was issued seeking opinion; and, on that basis, ESI Governing Body meeting, held on 19 February 2019 under the chairmanship of the union labour minister, ESIC budget for the FY 1919-20 was passed.

Soon after new government took charge, the same labour minister declared further reduction in favour of the employers' contribution to 3.25% and workers contribution to 0.75% reducing the total to 4% in gross violation of the unanimous decision of the Governing Body.

In totality, the employers' obligation towards ESI has been drastically reduced by 1.5% while workers contribution by only 1%. This would lead to huge benefits/savings of the employers to the tune of estimated Rs 8000 to Rs 10000 crore.

CITU said that the ill motive of the government to benefit the employers' lobby gets further clear by the fact that in the meeting of the tripartite Standing Committee of ESI Governing Body, held on 13 June, nothing was reported about the government's decision even though on reduction of ESI contribution was announced same evening. In this arbitrary decision and gross violation of ESI Governing Body decision and Gazette notification, labour minister is a party.

The increase in ESI fund, claimed by the government, is due to increase in enrollment in ESI with revision of upward ceiling of entitlement wage from Rs15000 to Rs 21000 from 1 January, 2017. Increase in fund benefitting mainly the employers/business class which played no role in it. Rather this is going to create serious difficulty to meet its obligations of social security and medical benefit to the enhanced number of beneficiaries.

CITU vehemently condemned such arbitrary move of the NDA-II government in the interest of the corporate lobby and demands implementation of the Governing Body decision on ESI contribution.

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

State	Centre	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	State	Centre	Feb 2019	Mar 2019
AP	GUNTUR	287	288	MHR	MUMBAI	302	305
	VIJAYWADA	291	291		NAGPUR	387	386
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	291	290		NASIK	357	357
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	272	273		PUNE	329	331
	GUWAHATI	272	273		SHOLAPUR	324	324
	LABAC SILCHAR	270	273	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	326	328
	MARIANI JORHAT	255	256		ROURKELA	308	309
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	248	250	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	313	312
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	334	340	PUN	AMRITSAR	333	332
CHD	CHANDIGARH	305	307		JALANDHAR	318	319
CHS	BHILAI	323	323		LUDHIANA	291	292
DLI	DELHI	293	297	RJN	AJMER	284	286
GOA	GOA	329	329		BHILWARA	283	288
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	278	279		JAIPUR	299	302
	BHAVNAGAR	292	293	TN	CHENNAI	278	276
	RAJKOT	296	297		COIMBATORE	282	282
	SURAT	266	268		COONOR	325	325
	VADODARA	274	275		MADURAI	292	294
HRY	FARIDABAD	272	274		SALEM	287	287
	YAMUNANAGAR	290	291		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	296	293
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	266	267	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	321	321
J&K	SRINAGAR	278	279		HYDERABAD	257	258
JRK	BOKARO	294	297		WARRANGAL	314	315
	GIRIDIH	343	342	TRP	TRIPURA	258	259
	JAMSHEDPUR	348	351	UP	AGRA	349	351
	JHARIA	356	358		GHAZIABAD	336	339
	KODARMA	381	376		KANPUR	335	340
	RANCHI HATIA	376	381		LUCKNOW	328	334
KNT	BELGAUM	303	306		VARANASI	323	325
	BENGLURU	292	295	WB	ASANSOL	330	332
	HUBLI DHARWAR	324	326		DARJEELING	272	272
	MERCARA	307	306		DURGAPUR	325	329
	MYSORE	309	308		HALDIA	336	337
KRL	ERNAKULAM	314	314		HOWRAH	281	285
	MUNDAKKAYAM	308	310		JALPAIGURI	277	277
	QUILON	357	356		KOLKATA	285	288
MP	BHOPAL	322	324		RANIGANJ	285	288
	CHHINDWARA	302	304		SILIGURI	276	276
	INDORE	278	280				
	JABALPUR	316	317				
ALL INDIA INDEX						307	309

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Protest against Children Deaths in Bihar



Demonstration before Bihar Bhavan in Delhi (Report Page 22)

Construction workers protest against online registration of welfare scheme



Bhavan Nirman Kamgar Union, Haryana staged rally, demonstration and dharna before deputy commissioner at mini secretariat of Jhind district on 20 June protesting against on line registration of welfare scheme. Rally was addressed by their national federation president Sukhbir Singh and others.

First Organised Trade Union in India



The Madras Labour Union, 1918

Glimpses of First CITU Conference; Kolkata, 1970



(From Top Left) (1) Flag hoisting; (2) A section of delegates; (3) P. Ramamurthy placing resolution on Unity & Struggle; (4) B. T. Ranadive addressing the public meeting

(Courtesy: Shramik Andolan, Kolkata; May 2019)