



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

Workers Joint Satyagraha & Courting Arrest

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West Bengal



Joint Procession in Kolkata



Breaking Police Cordon in Hoogly

Workers Joint Satyagraha & Courting Arrest

Andhra Pradesh



Tamilnadu



Odisha



Rajasthan



Haryana

Punjab



WORKING CLASS

MARCH 2018

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**On Urgently Building Bridge
with Workers and the People**

During last 4 months workers are in countrywide united campaign and agitation including more than a lakh workers' Mahapadav before the Parliament in November; countrywide Satyagraha and courting arrest in January-February; sector-wise workers strike and struggles including scheme worker massive strike on 17 January; incoming struggles and preparation for general strike. This period has also seen countrywide ongoing united militant peasant movement.

Yet, Modi government has not slowed down a bit in its aggressive persuasion of neoliberal agenda. On the contrary the aggression on the workers and the people intensified with deception and under the guise of pro-people issues. During this period a blue print of coming attacks has been presented through Union budget 2018-19. Under guise of employment generation fixed term employment has been introduced for all sectors to replace permanent employment in organised sector. Under guise of 50 crores of vulnerable people's health coverage, entire government's healthcare system is being handed over to *Trimurti* of domestic and foreign corporates in insurance, hospital and medicine business subsuming all existing healthcare schemes of the centre and of states. Similarly, in the name of cost+50% MSP for agricultural produce, the mischief is being played on cost calculation to favour private market players in place of government's procurement.

The period has also seen drive of dismantling the public and government sector and for privatisation in massive scale in all core sector of economy like coal, steel, defence, power, banking, railways, port & dock, dredging, Air India etc. At the same time all price restriction and reliefs are being withdrawn

more so in energy sector.

BJP rule has also seen rise of scamsters and their easy escape from the country. This has to be seen in the background of amendment in law for unlimited political funding without disclosure of the recipients.

All these clearly points out the gap between the trade unions protest, even resistance, action programmes and the understanding of the common workers and the people. This gap can be bridged only by thousands of CITU and its unions' activists explaining the issues, related policy and politics to the workers. It needs living link between the trade union leaders at different levels and through the activists with the masses. This is a serious organizational issue yet to be developed in vast part of our country. CITU units and unions must give priority attention in developing this network urgently to take on the Modi government and its ilk aspiring to replace.

Condolence

Comrade Md. Amin



CITU expressed its profound grief and kept its flag at half-mast for 3 days at its all India centre in BTR Bhavan in New Delhi to pay respectful homage to its veteran leader and the leader of the working class movement of the country Comrade Md. Amin who passed away on 12 February 2018 in Kolkata at the age of 89. Comrade Md. Amin was the founder member of CITU and was its General Secretary.

Born in a working class family, Comrade Md Amin became a jute mill worker in West Bengal at the age of 14 and was initiated in trade union struggles at shop floor. He held various responsibilities in West Bengal as well as at national level.

He was CITU's all India office bearer for decades including its Secretary and Vice President. He was CITU General Secretary in 2007-2010. He also led jute, transport and several other industry-wise federations in West Bengal and in the country. During these long years he had been playing crucial leading role in the working class movement of the country.

Comrade Md. Amin was a member of Rajya Sabha. He was the transport minister in the United Front and labour minister in the sixth Left Front governments of West Bengal.

Comrade Md. Amin joined the communist party in 1946 and was jailed for long periods. He rose at the highest level of CPI(M) as a member of the Polit Bureau and, as a veteran, continued to remain in its Central Committee as a special invitee till his demise.

Comrade Md. Amin was a poet in Urdu and was the author of several books. His life was an example of commitment, simplicity and courage.

CITU sent its heartfelt condolence to his comrades and members of his family.

Budget 2018-19: A Neoliberal Blueprint

J. S. Majumdar

Finance minister Arun Jaitley presented the Union budget 2018-19 in Lok Sabha on 1 February as a budget for 'generation of employment, health protection of country's 50 crore vulnerable people and huge relief to farmers'. The opposition dubbed it as election 'jumla'.

Budget of Neoliberal Reforms

No doubt, the finance minister's budget speech ordained for the next Lok Sabha election carefully choosing words for election propaganda. But, the Union budget 2018-19 is also a blueprint for big-step neoliberal reforms under guise of popular issues; and is a step for the country's unitary market consolidation for the corporates weakening federalism.

After self-praise for achieving high ranking in 'Ease of Doing Business' in the World Bank's report; this budget is presented for 'Ease of Living for common men'. The circulated copy of Arun Jaitley's speech has a misprint. In place of 'Ease of Living', it is printed as 'Ease of Leaving'. Aptly so, because in the big push for neoliberal labour reforms in favour of the corporates; the budget outlines the 'Ease of Leaving' employment.

Introduction of 'Fixed Term Employment' in Organised Sector

The budget speech claimed creation of 70 lakh 'formal jobs' this year on the basis of steps already taken by Modi government during last three years. And, stating "to carry forward this momentum" of creating more 'formal jobs', the budget proposed introduction of 'Fixed Term Employment in All Sectors.'

To prepare ground for this budget proposal, a gazette notification was issued 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'.

This proposal of 'Fixed Term Employment in All Sectors' has an added proposal of giving financial incentive by the government to the employers paying an amount equivalent to 12 percent of wage of each new employee for 3 years as EPF contribution.

These two combined proposals give clear message to the corporates that 'regular employment' till retirement age be replaced by recruitment of 'fixed term employment' for 3 years in all sectors of industries and services; and for this the government will give financial incentives. This is the model of employment generation designed by Modi government.

The Union labour minister called tripartite meeting of the government, employers' organizations and trade unions on 15 February to discuss this issue of 'Fixed Term Employment in All Sectors'. All ten central trade unions, except RSS-affiliated BMS, submitted a joint memorandum to the labour minister and walked out of the meeting rejecting the government's proposal of 'Fixed Term Employment in All Sectors' on merits and for making this meeting only a formality when the same issue was already introduced in the Parliament through budget.

After large scale agitation in apparel industry in Bangalore, mainly by women workers on EPF issue, government introduced, for the first time, 'Fixed Term Employment' in apparel and footwear industries. Opposed by the trade unions at that time, the government clarified that the apparel and footwear industries are seasonal in nature, the employment is 'casual' and the industries are unorganised. Now, the government is extending it in all sectors including the organised sector employing regular employees in permanent employment. The Economic Times on 2 February headlined this news item as "Hire & Fire: A Boost for Job Creation."

Privatisation of Healthcare Services

The budget speech announced two healthcare programmes as Modi government's "flagship" programmes.

One is proposal, with allotment of measly Rs.1200 crores to 1.5 lakh primary health units across the country renamed as "Health and Wellness Centres" (HWC); to take comprehensive healthcare and "provide free essential drugs and diagnostic services" to vast number of our people!

Who will supply these essential drugs through the HWCs? The budget speech says, "More than 800 medicines are being sold at lower price through more than 3 thousand Jan Aushadhi Centres." 'Jan Aushadhi Stores' were established by the predecessor Man Mohan Singh government in 2008 creating the 'Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India' (BPPI) in 2008 consisting of the Department of Pharmaceuticals and 5 public sector drug companies - Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd (IDPL), Hindusthan Antibiotics Ltd (HAL), Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceuticals Ltd (BCPL), Karnataka Antibiotics and Pharmaceuticals Ltd (KAPL) and Rajasthan Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd (RDPL) - with its headquarter at IDPL office at Gurgaon and was registered under 'Societies' Act in 2010 for "supply, fixing prices and monitoring sale of generic drugs through the network of Jan Aushadhi Stores". Modi government's Health Policy, 2017 states, "Public sector capacity in manufacture of certain essential drugs and vaccines is also essential in the long term for the health security of the country." But, same Modi government has already declared outright sale of all these pharmaceutical PSUs. Hence, budget proposal of supply of free medicines is for expansion of private sector medicine market through the proposed 1.5 lakh HWCs.

The other proposal is "National Health Protection Scheme" (NHPS) providing 50 crore of people with upto Rs.5 lakh insurance coverage per family of 10 crore poor and vulnerable families for "secondary and tertiary hospitalization".

Criticism to NHPS proposal centered round 'where is the money' in allotment and in mobilization. The budget speech only said "Adequate funds will be provided for smooth implementation of this programme." Depending on 1-3 per cent rate of insurance premium the scheme would require Rs.50,000 – Rs.1.5 lakh crore annually, former finance minister Chidambaram calculated and tried to ridicule the scheme as non-implementable.

But, underestimating the Modi government's resolve to privatise the healthcare services will be wrong. Both proposals - for primary and for secondary and tertiary healthcare – have common objective of privatisation and countrywide integration of entire healthcare services subsuming the States existing healthcare schemes and sharing fund allotment at 60:40 ratio. Former Union secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Sujatha Rao has aptly said, "The NHPS, however, raises a more important issue: The decisive redefinition of the role of the state from being a service provider to a financier." (*India Express February 13, 2018*). Financing whom? - Of course the corporate hospitals and private insurance companies. "This will be a big boost for us. The current insurance schemes were unviable, but with the increase in cover, I think we will see a growth in our state-sponsored scheme patients, said Suneeta Reddy, MD, Appolo Hospital Enterprise," reported ET on 2 February.

Data released by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) shows that the hospital and diagnostic centres attracted FDI worth US\$4.83 billion during 2000-17. According to National Family Health Survey-3, the private medical sector remains the primary source of healthcare for 70 percent of households in urban areas and 63 percent of households in rural areas. This burgeoning private sector hospitals having substantial FDI must have a growing market. At the same time high out of pocket cost from the private healthcare sector has led many households to incur Catastrophic Health Expenditure. This also must be addressed to an extent. NHPS is meant for that.

Seeking new investment, the government had relaxed FDI norms in 2016 in insurance sector permitting 49 per cent FDI through automatic route. Further, public sector New India Assurance Co Ltd and General Insurance Corporation of India were listed in 2017 for disinvestment. This year's budget proposed merger of three insurance companies – National Insurance Co. Ltd, United India Assurance Company Ltd and Oriental India Insurance Company Ltd and their subsequent disinvestment.

Manmohan Singh government already allowed 100% FDI through automatic route in Greenfield projects (new ventures) and, under approval by FIPB (Foreign Investment Promotion Board) in Brownfield project (existing companies). Those foreign drug companies, who left India during pre-neoliberal / early neoliberal stage, started coming back through FDI's Brownfield route. To facilitate the process of Indian companies' take-over by drug MNCs, Modi government has taken one more step allowing upto 74% of FDI in Brownfield in pharmaceuticals through automatic route.

A disciplined, integrated and pan India market has to be provided for this troika of corporates in hospital, insurance and medicine producing business with substantial foreign capital. NHPS is meant for that, not for this FY alone, but for perpetuality. Don't just ask 'where is the money'. It is neoliberal.

There are other areas of such neoliberal blueprint in this budget.

CTUs JOINT PROGRAMME

Countrywide Joint Satyagraha Movement

In response to the joint call of 10 central trade unions, workers held countrywide joint Satyagraha movement including courting arrest in several states. Following are some brief reports received at CITU centre.

Kerala

On 7 February, workers marched to central government offices and staged dharnas in several districts. The agitation in front of the Accountant General Office in Thiruvananthapuram was inaugurated by CITU state president Anthalavattam Anandhan. In all other districts, the agitations were inaugurated by various trade union leaders. In Ernakulam, it was inaugurated by K. Chandran pillai, in Kozhikode P. Nandha Kumar and in Kannur by K. P. Sahadevan.

Participation from Thiruvananthapuram was 3000, in Kollam 2300, Pathanamthitta 3500, Alappuzha 1625, Kottayam 3000, Ernakulam 2200, Thrissur 2500, Malappuram 2300, Palakkad 3100, Kozhikode 2500, Wayanad (three centre) 1050, Kannur 2050 and in Kasargode 1050.

Campaigns were conducted for the success of the agitation. Joint trade union conventions were held in all districts. Poster, notices, banners, display board etc were used for campaign.

Tamil Nadu

A joint meeting, attended by state leaders of CITU, AITUC, LPF, HMS, AICCTU, AIUTUC and INTUC, decided to conduct Jail Bharo programme in Tamilnadu on 25 January and planned preparatory network and programmes.

Accordingly, in all districts, except Trichy Rural, joint meetings were held; state level conventions were held in Trichy and Chennai; a meeting of the district level office bearers of all unions was held in Trichy on 28 December; campaign was conducted in all most all districts with leaflets and posters and through social media. District level conventions were held in 27 districts attended by 4927 activists majority of them from CITU; 9470 posters were pasted and about 2 lakh leaflets were distributed by the joint committees. 63 flex banners were displayed.

Jail bhara programme was conducted in 82 centres in all districts with total participation of 27,487 workers in the picketing with 2600 in Kanchipuram; 2000 in Chennai South; 1557 in Coimbatore; 1500 in Cudallore; 1500 in Chennai North; 1450 in Salem; 1500 in Tiruvarur; 1000 in Madurai Urban; 800 in Erode; 800 in Madurai Rural; 800 in Tuticorin; 800 in Theni; 750 in Namakkal; 600 in Tanjore; 550 in Perambalur; -540 in Dharmapuri and 500 in Ramnad.

14983 workers were arrested by the police out of the total participants in the Satyagraha movement.

Andhra Pradesh

Jointly led by CITU, AITUC, INTUC, IFTU, AICCTU, YSRTU, around 10,000 leaders and workers participated in the Satyagraha programme in 14 out of 16 districts and around 2000 of them were arrested. Participation in Satyagraha was 8000 from CITU, 1000 of AITUC, 500 of INTUC, 150 of IFTU, 10 of AICCTU, 50 of YSRTU 50 and others.

In Visakha City participation was highest with 3000 participants.

Odisha

As was jointly decided, state level Satyagraha movement was held in front of the state legislative Assembly participated by thousands of workers coming from different parts of the state. Workers marched from Bhubaneswar railway station to Assembly holding a meeting in front of the police barricade addressed by the leaders of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, AICCTU, AIUTUC and others. A memorandum containing 21 point demands was submitted to the state government and to the prime minister through the state government.

West Bengal

The trade unions joint civil disobedience and courting arrest movement had large participation in the state on 20 February. Out of total 22 districts of the state, 21 districts committees organised this programme on 20 February. Programme was organised at more than one centre in 3 districts. In East Medinipur district it will be organised on 27 February.

Thousands of workers gathered in respective district headquarters well before the scheduled time with full vigour against the antinational and antilabour policies of Modi government.

In 21 districts, total number of workers participation was more than 1 lakh with 1,500 - 6,000 participation in each of 21 districts. Police resorted to lathi charge in which more than 100 workers were injured in different districts. All existing 8 central trade unions in the state and large number of national federations jointly organised the programme. Left parties fully supported the programme.

Haryana

For preparation of Satyagraha and courting arrest movement, joint trade unions meeting was held; in all 21 districts trade unions conventions were held; separate handbills were distributed among organised and unorganised workers; joint and CITU's independent posters were pasted. 19 point charter of demands was submitted during Satyagraha movement in the state.

On 30 January, the Jail Bharo programme was unprecedented in Haryana. In all 21 districts, thousands of workers and employees marched to the district deputy commissioner's office and gheraoed it. There the police declared them as arrested and released. But, the workers refused to leave. This forced the police to arrange buses, arrest the workers and employees and taken to the temporary special jail.

In this programme, the women workers participation was over 70 per cent. The scheme workers participation was unprecedented. Other who participated in the programme include workers and employees from electricity, municipalities, marketing boards, PWD and other departments, teachers, construction workers, village chawkidars, village safai workers, industrial workers, contract and casual workers and others.

Rajasthan

Led jointly by CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and Rajasthan CITU; thousands of workers marched to the district collectorates and staged demonstrations, held meetings and courted arrest throughout the state on 31 January in pursuance of workers 12 point demands. At Sriganganagar, Hanumangarh, Bikaner, Jhunjhunu, Churu, Sikar, Jaipur, Kota, Rajsmand, Udaipur, Dungarpur, Chittorgarh, Alwar and Bharatpur workers brought out impressive rallies and courted arrest.

Joint Press Statement

15 March All India Protest Day

The meeting of the Central Trade Unions held on 22nd February 2018 at INTUC Office New Delhi expressed indignation and strongly condemned the Government of the day for their intensified attack on the lives and livelihood of the people and seriously compromising the national interest.

Attack on working class centering around dismantling labour laws designed to completely casualise employment conditions through various routes like amending Contract Labour Act, introducing Fixed Term Employment etc has assumed aggressive height. Further it is noted that the Government is out to erase the public sector from the industrial map of the country. Specific cases of attack on privatization of railways, opening coal mining to private and foreign companies without any restriction whatsoever, mass scale privatization as well as destruction of defence production network through widespread outsourcing, thereby dismantling the almost half of the ordinance factories are some of the examples of the gross anti-people and anti-national actions of the Govt. Accumulation of huge non-performing assets of the public sector banks arising out of pilferage of bank-funds by deliberately defaulting private corporate coupled with recent explosion of frauds with bank fund engineered by the same corporate class is also a reflection of the anti-national act of the Govt indulging and patronizing the same big-business class.

The Central Trade Unions reiterated their utter condemnation against the Union Budget 2018-19 which is basically anti-worker and anti-people in character and engineered a deception on the mass of the people through loud populist slogans without actually making any resource allocation.

The Central Trade Unions denounced the Govt of India's surreptitious move in postponing the 47th session of Indian Labour Conference, thereby reducing tripartism to a mockery.

CTUOs noted with satisfaction the surging struggles by the working people in different sectors throughout the country, both organised and unorganized.

The workers and federations of coal and transport have been preparing for united industrywide actions to be undertaken shortly. All the Federations of Defence Production workers have jointly decided to go in for nationwide strike on 15th March 2018. Many more sectoral actions are in the offing.

The CTUOs while reiterating their resolve to intensify preparation for indefinite strike in the days to come, calls upon all their constituents and working people in general irrespective of affiliations to jointly observe all India protest day on 15th march 2018.

- In solidarity with the striking Defence Production workers against anti-national privatization move;
- Against the Anti-people Deceptive Union Budget 2018-19

The CTUOs will meet shortly after 15th March 2018 to decide their next course of united countrywide action.

INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, UTUC, LPF

Meeting of CBT of EPFO

A K Padmanabhan

220th meeting of the tripartite Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of EPFO was held on 21 February. Following major issues were discussed.

1. Before the agenda could be taken up for discussion, as CITU representative I criticized the government and EPFO for not holding a special meeting on Supreme Court's judgment on EPF by second week of

December as was assured in the meeting held in May and again in November, 2017.

The chairman first tried to evade discussion saying that the issue was subjudice. But, being hotly contested by the agitated TU members demanding explanation, the minister then assured to hold such a special meeting in March. On this, EPFO will prepare a note and circulate in advance to the members.

2. Questioned by CITU as to how the EPFO data on subscribers was released to private researches and what is the EPFO's policy on this, the minister was not prepared with an answer only saying that it could be discussed later.

3. The meeting was informed that government already issued notification on the earlier decision on royalty amount in EDLI. However, as no copy of the notification was made available, it is necessary to verify as to whether all decisions on EDLI - to increase minimum EDLI benefit to Rs.2.5 lakhs and to give loyalty amounts of Rs.30,000, Rs.40,000 and Rs.50,000 to those who superannuate and had been members of EPFO for 20 years - were appropriately featured in the notification or not. The details on EDLI decisions were circulated to states and published in the Working Class.

4. In the action taken report to CBT, it was reported that the women and child development (WCD) ministry rejected EPF for Anganwadi workers; and that it still remains under government's consideration.

This issue of EPF for Anganwadi workers was brought up in the agenda in the earlier meeting saying that the committee, led by the finance minister, had recommended it. CBT had discussed and accepted 10% contribution for Anganwadi workers. This was trumpeted as a major decision of Modi government and, now, WCD Ministry says Anganwadi workers are not regular employees! We have to wait for the final decision of the government. However, TU members registered their protest against WCD ministry's decision.

5. The major issue in this meeting was the interest rate for the year 2017-18. All the unions in the first round wanted at least 9%. But, the government was not prepared to accept even last year's rate of 8.65%. TUs finally wanted at least last year's rate of 8.65%. After long discussion, the minister first said 8.5% and finally 8.55%. Even this is subject to approval of the finance ministry. All TU members protested.

6. The administrative charges, being paid by employers, was decreased to 0.5% from existing 0.65% as there is surplus in the charges now being collected.

7. CBT once again decided to change the threshold of 20 workers to 10 workers for applicability of EPF. This decision originally was taken in CBT meeting 10 years before and since then pending with the government. Employers' representatives opposed this saying that it would burden the small industries.

8. Government wants to amend the EPF Act in the name of implementing the budget announcement to reduce EPF contribution of women workers to 8% for the first 3 years. In his budget speech, the finance minister made ridiculous claim that this will "incentivise women's employment and will increase take home pay."

In the meeting, CITU representative condemned it as a baseless claim. It was also pointed out by CITU that the amendment has been drafted in such a way that the government could at any time notify such exemptions to all sections of workers and in all categories of industries. All other the TU representatives also opposed this vehemently. Employers' representatives also said that this would not help in increasing women employment.

The minister was compelled to defer a decision and assured that the concerns, expressed in the CBT meeting, would be taken up with the finance minister.

CITU also criticized the move to include labour law amendments in budget speeches without prior consultation with the trade unions.

9. There was also a proposal to give a new definition to wages in the EPF Act. A four member committee will study the proposal and will be taken up in the next meeting

10. There was another proposal of a new paragraph in the EPF regarding the advances from EPF for those who are out of employment. This issue will be discussed in the next meeting as many other issues such as full withdrawal in the case of unemployment are involved.

11. Once again the issue of options to EPS employees to opt for National Pension Scheme (NPS) was brought in the agenda. TUs rejected it earlier and again this time. The minister had to defer it.

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Road Transport

National Convention Calls: Prepare for Strike Action



National convention against M. V. Act (Amendment) Bill, held at Mavalankar Hall in New Delhi on 15 February; gave call to all the road transport workers, other stake holders and owners to prepare for countrywide strike in pursuance of 8 point demands adopted by the convention.

The demands include withdrawal of anti-people M.V. Act (Amendment) Bill; rollback of 29 December 2016 notification enhancing charges; bringing petroleum products under GST compensating shortfall to states governments; reduction of GST rate of prefabricated buses; reduction of third party insurance; protection and safeguarding state road transport undertakings with financial assistance; protection of all stake holders in transport sector; and Rs. 24,000 as minimum wage to transport workers with social security scheme benefits.

After welcome speech of AIRTWF joint general secretary R. Lakshmaiah; convener K. K. Divakaran placed the convention declaration which was supported by Nirmal Singh Daliwal of NFIRTW, Umesh Sharma of INTWF, Hanumanth Tate of RTWFI, Shanmugam of LPF, S. Sampath of TTSF, Charles George of TUCI, Sukumar Ghosh of UTUC, V. Sajith -Motor Vehicle Officers Association, M. K. Vijayan from Association of Automobile Workshops, Sugumaran from Lorry Owners Association, Asfaq Ahammad from All India Transport Department Technical Officers Association, Manoj Perumpally of JTUC. All speakers explained the dangers of the M. V. Act Amendment Bill. The convention unanimously adopted the declaration and the action plan.

A presidium with Shyamal Chakraborty of AIRTWF, M. L. Yadav of NFIRTW, K. P. Haridas of INTWF, Sandeep Shinde of RTWFI, Natarajan of LPF, D. V. Padmanabhan of TTSF and T. C. Vijayan of UTUC conducted the proceedings. K. Hari Prasad, MP and member of the parliamentary select committee attended as the chief guest. (*Inputs: R. Lakshmaiah*)

Complete Strike of Road Transport in Kerala

K. K. Divakaran

Dawn to dusk motor vehicle strike in Kerala on 24 January in protest against petrol and diesel spiraling price hikes due to Modi government's wrong policy and against anti-worker and anti-people Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill, 2017 paralysed entire road transport system in the

state. The strike call was given by the Kerala Transport Industry Protection Council - the joint forum of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, STU, Janata Dal TUC, TUCI, KTUC and owners associations.

The workers of autos, taxis, private and KSRTC buses, lorries, driving schools, automobile workshops, spare parts distributors etc; and owners of the motor vehicles participated in the total strike. All democratic forces supported the strike. Fishermen and Church of South India, a major Christian community, voluntarily supported the strike. Due to the strike government offices and shops were deserted.

In Thiruvananthapuram the striking workers and owners organised march to A.G.'s office and staged dharna inaugurated by CITU state general secretary Elamaram Karim and addressed by CITU's road transport workers federation AIRTWF general secretary K. K. Divakaran who appreciated the workers-owners joint effort in organising the strong protest actions against the misrule of BJP government. Similar protest marches and mass dharnas were organised in all towns throughout Kerala. The workers of BMS union, ignoring their leadership's decision not to join the strike, joined the strike and protest actions. This was a new experience of workers, fishermen, a major Christian community organisation, and owners of vehicles joining hands in this protest action.

The BJP government permitted petroleum companies to increase price of petrol and diesel daily since 16 July, 2017. The price of diesel was around Rs.70 per litre on 29 January, 2018 which was all time high. The price of petrol is Rs77 and in Mumbai it is Rs.80.64 per litre. The price of diesel and petrol was increased daily by Paisa.20 and Paisa.15 respectively on an average in last two weeks of January. The price of diesel was increased by more than Rs.9 in last 6 months of 2017. When BJP came into power at the centre, the price of petrol and diesel were Rs.69.15 and Rs.49.57 respectively. It was nearly Rs.19 increase in diesel.

This increase in petrol and diesel prices was despite fall of international crude oil price. The crude oil price was \$120 / per barrel in May, 2014 which came down to \$70 / barrel in January 2018.

The reason of petrol and diesel price rise is due to abnormal increase of cess, tax and excise duty additionally levied by the central government. The state governments are also levying additional tax. Nearly 50% of price is towards tax, cess, excise duty, etc. Modi government's policy helped the private oil companies like Reliance and Essar for windfall profit while petroleum price rise is causing increase in fare and conveyance charges for the common people. The price rise of petrol and diesel will have cascading effect on price increase of all essential commodities.

Adding to the woes of the motor transport industry and its workers on account of price hikes of petrol and diesel due to Union government's wrong policy, is the increase in insurance premium by about 200%.

Under AIRTWF and other trade unions, road transport workers organised countrywide protests staging mass dharna and holding gate meetings against abnormal increase of price of petrol and diesel.

Bihar State Convention of Road Transport Workers

Inaugurating the Bihar state convention of road transport workers of different motor vehicles at Patna on 4 February AIRTWF joint general secretary R. Lakshmaiah said that the M. V. Act Amendment Bill, which is anti-workers, anti-operators and pro-corporate, was being placed in Rajya Sabha in early February and called upon the transport workers to build broadest possible unity to build united struggle

Total Strike in Punjab Roadways

Over 6,000 workers of all the 18 depots and 2 sub-depots of Punjab Roadways went on a day's complete strike on 21 February, held protest rallies and staged demonstrations across the state. All bus depots were deserted and not a single bus moved on the road.

The strike call was given jointly by CITU affiliated Punjab Roadways Pun Bus Contract Workers Union and all other unions in Punjab Roadways demanding regularisation of jobs of all contract bus drivers and conductors; equal pay for equal work; new buses as per requirement and withdrawal of anti-worker and anti-people Road Safety Bill.



Deserted Bus Stand at Tarn Taran

Coal

Protest against Coal Privatisation and Corporate Loot

Spontaneous and organised protest burst out across all public sector coal companies – CIL, its 9 subsidiaries and SCCL - coal workers staging demonstrations, burning effigy and blocking coal transportation ever since the Modi government's Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) took decision on 20 February to allow private coal mining for commercial use without price restriction and end use.

All five recognised coal federations of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and BMS are meeting at Ranchi on 4 March to decide on more than 5 lakh coal workers' countrywide agitation including strike..

In a statement on 21 February, CITU strongly condemned Modi government CCEA's decision of allowing coal's private commercial mining by the domestic and foreign corporates without any price restriction and its end-use; in total reversal of four decades long policy of only public sector coal mining with exception of private coal mining only for captive use in power, cement and steel industries.

Coal PSUs contributed immensely in country's industrial development, power generation capacity and the economy. This decision of the government will pave the way for weakening and privatisation of coal PSUs. This will affect coal production; severely compromise with the rights and safety of the workers in coal private mining; withdrawal of price restriction and their end-use will increase manifold burden on the people and severely impair energy security of the country.

This decision is a follow up of Modi government amending in 2016 the Coal Mine Nationalisation Act through Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Bill which was vehemently opposed by the coal trade unions through industrywide strike and by the Left MPs in the Parliament.

CITU welcomed the workers protest led by CITU's All India Coal Workers Federation and called upon the trade union movement and the coal unions to build up countrywide strong opposition to such gross anti-workers, anti-people and anti-national move of Modi government.

Steel

Protest against Privatisation of ASP in Durgapur

Ultimately, as per decision of Modi government, SAIL management issued tender notice on 13 February



Road Blockade



Gate Meeting

for outright sale of Associated Steel Plant (ASP) at Durgapur. The news broke out like wildfire. On the very next day, spontaneous agitation broke out staging demonstrations and holding gate meetings jointly held by CITU, INTUC, INTTUC of ruling TMC and several other trade unions. Surrounding area of ASP was completely blockaded. Surya Sen Avenue was blocked paralyzing road transport for 5 hours. The leaders demanded intervention of West Bengal government in the manner Tamilnadu government intervened at the time of disinvestment of Salem Steel Plant.

Since continuous agitation in different forms are going on in the Steel township.

Electricity

Defend Right to Electricity; Oppose Electricity (Amendment) Bill,

Electricity: Essential Service for Socio-Economic Development

Immediately after independence, Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948 was enacted for '*Generation, Transmission and Distribution of Electricity*' by both the central and state governments as the electricity was conceived as an essential service for socio-economic development. Central Electricity Authority (CEA) and State Electricity Boards (SEBs) were constituted for electrification in the entire country for rapid development in agriculture, commerce and industry, health, education, transport and communication. SEBs were not meant for earning profit. Cost of supply was realized through cross subsidy – the people having limited financial capacity were subsidized by higher income groups of consumers.

Changed Approach with Adoption of Neoliberal Economic Policy

With adoption of neoliberal economic policy, government's approach to electricity was also drastically changed. SEBs were blamed for making losses and were trifurcated through Electricity Act 2003. Government allowed private companies to operate in the area of energy resources as well as in generation, distribution and transmission of electricity.

Initially, government tried to give up its responsibility of rural electrification through Article 6 of the original draft of Electricity Act, 2003. But, facing strong opposition from the people and electricity employees and engineers, the government had to remove that Article from the draft. Despite increased privatization, franchises, contractorisation and out-sourcing; the 2003 Act, failed to fulfill its declared goal of making electricity cheap. Odisha was the first in inviting US company AES in the state. They failed to serve. Ambani's Reliance also came and failed. Now, entire state is being served by government's companies.

Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPP), developed through tariff based international competitive bidding, proved to be a flop. Only 3 out of 16 projects were operationalised. Those too are attempting tariff hikes through backdoor lobbying. Ambanis in Sasan and Adani in Mundra lost their legal battle in Supreme Court in their attempt to legitimize unlawful business. 10 DISCOMs, who signed PPAs with these projects, charged the consumers thousands of crores of rupee. Adani's 'deep sea trading of coal' has become history of cheating with complicity of unscrupulous political leaders in power. Earlier, accumulated loss of all the SEBs stood to Rs.30,000 crore in 5 decades. But, within 14 years of corporatisation of SEBs, accumulated loss of all DISCOMs stood at Rs.4.3 lakh crores besides debt burden over Rs.5 lakh crores to financial institutions while imposing 6 to 8 times tariff hikes burden on the people.

National Co-ordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers (NCCOEEE) demanded of the Government of India to issue white paper on the impact of implementation of Electricity Act, 2003.

New Attack

Modi government now has widened the scope of super profit for private business in power sector through proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2014 proposing segregation of Electricity Distribution in two entities as Carriage and Content. The Bill proposes that multiple suppliers can supply electricity through single distribution network of the distributing agency in a particular area under 'Open Access' system on the plea that consumers will have choice of supplier. But, the fact remains that the poor consumers will have no choice on escalating cost of supply other than the government owned supply-company. Private suppliers will be interested to make business in the revenue potential cities and industrial hubs. Government owned distribution companies will have to bear the loss with low consuming poor consumers without scope of cross subsidy. It means that high consuming financially sound consumers will enjoy lower cost of supply.

While electricity cost has substantially been rising and profit of private companies are increasing; regular work in electricity are being transferred from regular workers to casual, outsourced, contractor and franchisee workers at lowest possible remuneration rates in gross violation of laws.

Time has come for the electricity workers and the people to oppose this exploitation of consumers and workers. Electricity Employees Federation of India (EEFI) appealed to the people of all walks of life to come forward to oppose Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2014 likely to be placed in the Parliament in the current budget session and stand by the electricity workers in their struggle of exploitation of consumers and electricity workers. (*From: The public appeal of EEFI*)

Uttar Pradesh

Joint Convention of Electricity Workers and Consumers

Organised jointly by the district units of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and Uttar Pradesh Bijli Board Employees Union (UPBBEU), about 800 electricity workers, farmers and other sections of the people joined a huge Bulandshahar district Mahapanchayat on 5 January against privatisation and price rise of electricity.

The convention was addressed by electricity scientist Prabir Purakayastha from Delhi Science Forum, Electricity Employees Federation of India (EEFI) vice president Subhas Lamba, UPBBEU (CITU) president Bhagawan Misra and its general secretary Bishwambhar Singh, AIKS state vice president D. P. Singh and its district president Chandrapal Singh, CITU state general secretary Prem Nath Rai and its state vice president Surendra Singh and others.

Purakayastha told about the experience of privatisation in Odisha and present attempt of privatisation of supply. Lamba told the convention about the programme of NCCOEEE against privatisation and price rise organising state level conventions and will be staging demonstration before the Parliament during the budget session. If Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2014 is passed by the Parliament, the electricity workers and engineers will go for nationwide strike and work boycott. As per Hyderabad conference decision, EEFI has launched countrywide campaign demanding regularisation of jobs and equal pay for equal work. EEFI has also launched campaign among the people on privatisation and price rise of electricity. Kisan leader D. P. Singh said that privatisation of electricity sector is causing immense problems for the peasants. Against privatisation and price rise of electricity, the peasants of Uttar Pradesh will be staging state level demonstration before the state Assembly on 15 March. *(Input: Subhas Lamba)*

State Convention of Electricity Workers and Engineers

Following national decision, Joint Struggle Committee (JSC) of electricity workers and engineers in Uttar Pradesh held state level convention at Lucknow on 3 February. The convention resolution was placed by UP State Electricity Board Engineers Association general secretary Rajiv Singh. Convener of the JSC and president of All India Power Engineers Federation Shailendra Dubey supporting the resolution explained the anti-workers-engineers-consumers character of the Electricity Amendment Bill 2014 essentially for privatisation and electricity price increase.

Addressing the convention in support of the resolution, Prem Nath Rai, on behalf of the UPBBEU, recalled the earlier resistance in Kanpur forcing the government to retreat from privatising distribution at the same time privatising distribution at Agra in



absence of any resistance. Others who addressed the convention include Girish Pandey of Bidyut Mazdoor Panchayat; Mahendra Rai of UP Bijli Karmachof UP Bijli Mazdoor Sangathan; Rajendra Ghiriwal of UP Bidyut Mazdoor Sangh; Sambhu Ratan Dixit of UP Tap Bidyut Mazdoor Sangh; Parasu Ram of Rajya Bidyut Parishad Prabidhik Karmachari Sangh; P. S. Bajpai of UP Rajya Bidyut Parishad Shramik Sangh; Ram Sahare Verma of Bidyut Karyalaya Karmik Sangh; Puse Lal of Bidyut Mazdoor Union UP; G. P. Singh of Bidyut Paramedical Association. The convention fully endorsed the agitational and campaign programme of NCCOEEE.

In the meantime, as directed by Yogi government, public sector UP Power Corporation Ltd invited tender on 4 February for privatisation of power distribution in seven districts. Immediately, UP Electricity Employees Joint Struggle Committee served notice to the management to rescind the order within 11 February.

Andhra Pradesh Indefinite Strike by Electricity Contract Workers in Andhra Pradesh

Under the banner of United Forum of Electricity Contract Workers of Andhra Pradesh, 23,000 contract workers of the state public sector Andhra Pradesh Power Corporation are on indefinite strike, till going to the press, since 20 February. The strike is 95% in all power stations,

substations and supply establishments across the state demanding of the Corporation management to issue order with specific date of implementation of their earlier commitment of wage increase and direct payment. The striking workers declined to accept verbal assurances of the government and the management.

The strike took place in the background of most of the contract workers, despite being technically qualified, skilled and working for long years in 'permanent and perennial' nature of work of the Corporation; are being paid low wages through the contractors in violation of Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act and Supreme Court 's judgement of equal pay for equal work.

EEFI and CITU supported the strike and the demands being just and called upon the state government to settle the demands early and refrain from taking any repressive measure.

Cement

State Conference of Rajasthan Cement Workers

The 2nd state conference of Rajasthan Cement Shramik Samannaya Samiti (CITU) was held on 6 January in Chittorgarh attended by delegates coming from unions in Birla White Cement at Kharia Khangar, Birla Cement at Chittor, Chittor Cement, Lafarge Cement, Wonder Cement, Aditya Cement at Shabhupura and J. K. Cement.

The conference was inaugurated by Nisith Choudhury, CITU leader in the national wage negotiating committee for cement workers. The conference was addressed by the general secretary of West Bengal federation of cement workers (CITU) Haradhan Shai and CITU state president Ravidra Shukla, The Conference was greeted by the leaders of several sectoral unions. The proceeding of the conference was conducted by CITU state leader and its Chittorgarh district secretary G. R. Meena.

The conference elected a 9 member committee with Kaluram Suthar as convener and Kanhaiyalal Srimali as legal adviser. The conference was concluded in a public meeting.

Agitation by the cement workers coordination committee: Following the state conference, the coordination committee staged one day dharna in front of the Nimbahera administration in Chittorgarh district on 16 January and submitted memoranda to the civil and police administration on 5 point demands mainly against victimization by the managements of several cement industry managements in gross violation of law and repression unleashed by the police at the instance of the managements.

Public Sector

PSU Committee Meeting Decides

Massive Campaign preparing for United Action

A meeting of the Steering Committee of All India Coordination Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions of CITU was held in Visakhapatnam of Andhra Pradesh on 19 February to discuss the threat to central public sector units (CPSUs) posed by the ongoing dismantling and privatisation drive of Modi government.

CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, its national secretary and convener of the Committee S. Dev Roye and its members - convener of Joint Action Front of PSUs in Bengaluru Meenakshi Sundaram, Steel Workers Federation of India general secretary P. K. DaS, BSNL Employees



Union general secretary P. Abhimanyu, general secretary of Petroleum and Gas Workers Federation of India Nagon Chutia, K. Chandran Pillai from Kerala, Ch. Narsinga Rao from Andhra Pradesh and H.S. Rajput and Kumar Mangalam from CITU centre attended the meeting. The meeting was presided by Meenakshi Sundaram. The meeting decided to launch weeklong countrywide massive campaign among the CPSU workers explaining the current situation to prepare them for united action programmes, as will be decided jointly by all central trade unions, the implementation details of which will be discussed in the next meeting of the Steering Committee in the 2nd week of April.

On conclusion of the meeting, all attending leaders addressed and greeted thousands of public sector workers in a rally same evening organised by the Visakhapatnam Public Sector Coordination Committee in support of agitating DCIL workers fighting against the strategic sale of DCIL and disinvestment of Vizag Steel Plant. *(Inputs; Kumar Mangalam)*

Massive Privatisation Drive CPSUs Etc

To meet budget deficit, Modi government has earned record more than Rs. 1 lakh crore during fiscal year 2017-18 as against budget estimate of Rs.72,500 crore from privatisation of Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) through sale and disinvestment.

NITI Aayog has already prepared 4 list of profit making CPSUs and submitted the same to the Union ministry which include 40 CPSUs for 'strategic disinvestment' that is total management in private control even with minority share holding.

Ultimately NITI Aayog is now working on a new list of loss-making CPSUs for privatisation.

On the other side, there was no response to the tender called for privatisation of 23 premier railway stations in the first phase. There was only one respondent each for Jammu Tawi and Kochi railway stations. The government had to cancel the tenders. Now the Union budget 2018-19 proposed privatisation drive of all 600 railway stations by floating a Indian Railway Station Development Corporation Ltd with intension to have private partnership and then for stage-wise privatisation.

West Bengal

Jointly organised by 6 unions, about 3000 municipal workers of West Bengal held an impressive state level rally at Rani Rashmoni Avenue in Kolkata on 22 December in pursuance of 5 point demands including regularisation of jobs of more than 10 years continuously serving casual workers; equal pay for equal work; payment of arrear DA; implementation of 6th Pay Commission recommendation etc; and submitted a joint memorandum to the Governor.

Addressing the rally the union leaders condemned the anti-workers attitude of TMC government and refusal of the minister-in-charge to hold discussion with the union; and cautioned about intensification of statewide agitation. *(Inputs: Rana Mitra)*

Haryana

Significant Victory of ASHA Workers

About 20,000 ASHA workers brought out colourful and robust rallies in 21 district headquarters of Haryana on 2 February to celebrate victory after 16 days continuous struggle and strike ending in an agreement between the government and their CITU-led union on substantial rise in fixed pay and incentives.

About 28,000 scheme workers were on the street in 17 January countrywide joint strike holding rallies and demonstrations in which ASHA workers participation was highest with 12,530 out total 19,855 workers in the state. It was the launching pad for ASHA workers independent struggle in Haryana. Beginning with staging continuous relay dharna in districts headquarters from the very next day on 18 January with increasing number joining, the movement was lifted at a higher plane on 27 January with ASHA workers joining in complete indefinite statewide strike. On 27-28 January, the striking workers marched to the residences of ruling party BJP MLAs, MPs and state and central ministers and staged demonstrations. This was followed by joining countrywide workers joint Satyagraha movement by courting arrest on 30 January.

Ultimately, on invitation, the union's delegation held 3 hours long discussion with the state health minister concluding in an agreement on 1 February. Earlier rounds of discussion were with the officials. After health minister's public announcement through media about the agreement, the union called off the strike.

By this agreement, a ASHA worker's monthly fixed remuneration has been raised by Rs.3,000, increasing from Rs.1000 to Rs.4,000. In addition, incentives in 4 categories were raised by Rs.100 each and in one category by Rs.50 each. On an average total incentives have been raised by Rs.1200-1300 per month. 50% of it would be paid in addition as bonus by the state government which was introduced following the union's agitation in 2013. As such, the total average increase is Rs.4,500 per month.

On an average, pre-agreement monthly earning of a ASHA worker was Rs.4,500, mainly from incentives, including Rs.1000 as fixed pay. After agreement the average monthly earning of a ASHA worker would be around Rs.9000, including Rs.4,000 as fixed pay and the rest as incentives; equivalent to notified minimum wage in the state which was the basic demand of the union. Many ASHA workers are earning more as the remuneration is incentive based.

In the agreement, there are some other benefits also like in case of accidental death Rs.3 lakh compensation and all medical expenses to the injured worker; coverage of all under insurance scheme; providing each with mobile phone; withdrawal of court cases on government agreeing to reinstate all removed facilitators; weightage in recruitment as ANM and staff nurse; etc.

During struggle period state leaders of CITU and Sarb Karamchari Sangh moved in districts organising the struggle; CITU state committee met twice to review, coordinate and guide the struggle; state units of AIDWA, AIAWU, DYFI and SFI also extended support and solidarity.

Despite attempt of the BJP government and BMS to break the strike and agitation, ASHA workers remained firm. Due to this struggle the union's organisational base widened and membership increased. Workers confidence on CITU increased. During victory celebration on 2 February at Rohtak, about 400 ASHA workers made spot collection and donated to CITU Rohtak district committee.

- Jai Bhagawan

Karnataka

Militant Struggle & Achievement of MDM Workers

Under the banner of their union - Karnataka Akshara Dasoha Noukarara Sanstha of CITU - more than 12,000 Mid Day Meal (MDM) workers coming from 28 districts staged an state level indefinite sit-in at Freedom Park in Bengaluru since 8 February demanding increase in remuneration and social security benefits. They also marched to the state primary and secondary education minister's residence compelling him to meet the protesters and assuring to consider their demands favourably.

The union leaders declared that they would intensify the struggle by resorting to hunger strike. Next day, on 9 February, the chief minister invited the union for discussion and gave assurance to increase their remuneration through the state budget allocation scheduled to be placed on 16 February. The government also agreed in principle to work out a pension scheme for the MDM workers in association with the LIC of India. It has also agreed to make proper guidelines for prior enquiry and procedures for taking any disciplinary action against MDM workers to end arbitrary decision, harassment and summary dismissals by the SMC committees. On this basis, the agitation was withdrawn.

As per the assurance, the MDM workers got an increase of Rs.500 in remuneration with retrospective effect from 1 January 2018 raising total remuneration of Rs.2,700 per month.

Their national federation MDMWFI and CITU Karnataka state committee congratulated the union and the workers for their achievement. \

Madhya Pradesh

ASHA Workers Padav in Bhopal

Led by ASHA-USHA, ASHA Sahyogini Ekta Union of CITU, hundreds of ASHA, USHA and ASHA facilitators assembled at Neelam Park in Bhopal staging a Padav and holding meeting pursuing their long pending demands of wage increase, social security benefits etc and payment of all accumulated dues of the workers amounting to crores of rupees in the state.

The meeting was addressed by CITU state general secretary Pramod Pradhan, state general secretary of the union Kamallesh Sharma and others. The meeting was presided by A T Padmanabhan, president of the union.

The workers then marched to the state assembly. The march was stopped at the police barricade. The administration official came to the venue and received memorandum on behalf of the chief minister. The state joint director of the National Health Mission also came to the venue and received memorandum on behalf the NHM. The union submitted 12 point charter of demands to the government through the officers. Both the officers assured positive response to the demands of the workers. The union has decided to go for one day strike on 17 March 2018 if their demands were met.



Telangana

2nd Conference of Anganwadi Union

2nd Conference of Telangana State Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union (TSAWH)) of



CITU began with a rally and holding public meeting in Nizamabad on 18 February. Addressing the Anganwadi employees in the meeting, CITU national secretary and its Anganwadi federation AIFAWH general secretary A R Sindhu explained as to how Modi government has been dismantling ICDS step by step and as to how Anganwadi employees, AIFAWH and CITU are resisting it; and called upon them to come in huge number to join the Mahapadav before the Parliament being organised by AIFAWH during its monsoon session demanding implementation of recommendations of 45th Indian

Labour Conference on Scheme Workers. In his address, CITU Telangana state general secretary M Saibabu explained as to how the KCR government's policy in the state is same as that of the BJP government at the centre. TSAWH general secretary P Jayalakshmi called upon the workers to resist the repressive TSR government's orders - GOs 14 and 19 – on summary dismissal and intensify the struggle for minimum wages and pension. The meeting was also addressed by CITU Nizamabad district Ramesh Babu and presided over by the union's president M. Padma.

In the delegates' session, Jayalakshmi placed general secretary's 3 years report narrating as to how KCR government, bureaucracy and local TRS leaders were trying hard to disrupt the CITU union and form a puppet union. Despite threats of TRS MLAs and victimisation of their leaders, the rank and file workers remained firm in CITU union. Now the TRS government is handing over the supplementary nutrition in one project to Akshayapatra.

26 delegates participated in the general secretary's report. The report and accounts were unanimously adopted. The conference elected 69 member state committee and 31 office bearers with Ch. Bharati as honorary president, M Padma as president and P Jayalakshmi as general secretary. Addressing the delegates Sindhu gave observation on the basis of AIFAWH conference tasks; emphasised on the need to politically equip the cadres. M Saibabu and K Subbaravamma, general secretary of AP State Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union, P Bhaskar, CITU secretary also addressed the delegates. The conference felicitated K Jamuna, who was victimized for participating in the land struggle by Kisan Sabha in Nizamabad.

Andhra Pradesh

Vizag Steel Plant

CITU Union Won 'Recognised Union' Election

Workers Referendum against Privatisation

In the election for Recognition of Union in Vishakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), held on 5 February through secret ballot; CITU-affiliated Steel Plant

Employees Union defeated its nearest rival and sitting recognised INTUC-affiliated Vishakha Steel Employees Congress in a triangular contest with AITUC-affiliated Vishakha Steel Workers Union securing close third position.

Total strength of VSP is 17,543. A high 96.3% of the total number of 11,544 workers, as eligible voters as per voters list, cast their votes. CITU union secured 3,784; INTUC union 3,586 and AITUC union 3,234 votes out of total 12 unions contesting.

It was a vote for recognition of the union in VSP. But, it was also a workers referendum against central government's decision of divesting 10% RINL shares in the market. Despite direct involvement of the ministers, MPs and MLAs of both the ruling parties - BJP at the centre and TDP in the state – their unions faced humiliating defeat completely rejected by the workers BMS securing only 206 and TNTUC of TDP securing 126 votes.

Workers in Vishakhapatnam including of VSP supported CITU for its forefront role in building workers united struggle in defence of the public sector against the central government's drive of dismantling and privatizing PSUs. This was reflected in the recent more than one lakh workers and people's participation in the 'people's ballot' against the strategic sale of Dredging Corporation of India in Vishakhapatnam.

Rajasthan

Remembering the Martyrs of Working Class Movement



On 24 February, a commemoration meeting was held outside the J. K. Synthetic company gate at Kota in memory of 8 young worker, between the age of 20 to 25, who became martyrs of working class movement in the country on this very day on 24 February 1971 when, connived by the then ruling Congress state government and the mill owner, the police opened fire on the peaceful agitation of the workers demanding removal of bonus ceiling.

The memorial meeting was attended by the workers of long-closed J. K. Synthetic company and the family members of the martyrs. CITU state secretary Bhanwar Singh Shekhawat paid respectful homage to the martyrs and called upon the workers to intensify struggle for workers pending demands in the now 24 years long closed factory. Others who paid homage to martyrs and addressed the memorial meeting include all local unions leaders, CPI(M) district secretary Dulichand and leaders of SFI and AIDWA.

Workers - Peasants Solidarity Day

Workers-Peasants Solidarity Day was observed in different states across the country. Following are some reports received at CITU centre till going to the press.

Kerala

On 19 January the Day was observed in all districts in Kerala under the leadership of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU demanding curbing price rise, universalisation of PDS and ban on forward trading in essential commodities; remunerative prices for peasants as per Swaminathan committee report and debt waiver for poor peasants and agricultural workers; minimum wage of not less than Rs 18000 per month for all workers; comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers; implementation of MGNREGA in all rural areas; amendment to the Act to cover urban areas; and food security for all etc. (Inputs: E. Kareem)

Andhra Pradesh

On 19 January Workers Peasant Alliance Programme Was observed in the state in which around 3000 workers, peasants and agricultural workers participated at 21 centers in the state. .CITU, AIAWU, AIKS, AP Koulu Rythu Sangam state leadership met and a joint pamphlet was issued for the campaign; dharnas were staged in front of all district collectorates, except one, and memoranda were submitted. In 6 district headquarters dharnas were staged and torchlight processions were also brought out.

A torchlight march was organised by Visakha CITU city committee on 19 January demanding minimum wage of Rs18000 to workers; minimum support price to the farmers and debt removal; 200 days job with Rs.500 wage per day under MNREGA; withdrawal of Land Acquisition Amendment Bill, strengthening of PDS system etc. Torch light march started from Ambedkar statue near LIC office to Gandhi statue near GVMC. The rally was addressed by state president of CITU Ch Narasinga Rao and other CITU leaders RKSV Kumar, P. Venkatareddy, Y Raju, P Mani, Appala raju and others participated. (Inputs: RKSV Kumar)

Rajasthan

BJP Government Arrests Kisan Leaders to Suppress Movement

To pre-empt a state level Kisan Mahapadav in front of the state legislative assembly on 22 February, jointly called by All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and other farmers organisation; BJP's Basundhara Raje government's police arrested hundreds of kisan leaders across the state and sent them to jail. The arrested leaders include AIKS national vice president Amra Ram, state kisan leader Prema Ram and others while they were leading farmers' Padayatras from different locations converging to state capital Jaipur for the Mahapadav.

Against this arrest and attempt to suppress movement, AIKS led block level mass protest next day and burnt the effigy of the chief minister. A bandh was observed in Sikar; traders supported the bandh and downed their shutters. During this protest also police arrested more number of local leaders. AIKS general secretary Hannan Mollah called this attack as an attempt of "crushing

the voice of farmers, who have a legitimate demand for their produce.” says Hannan Mollah, general secretary of AIKS.

In a statement on 22 February, CITU national president K. Hemalata condemned this BJP government’s attack on the peaceful legitimate movement of the farmers in Rajasthan; demanded immediate release of arrested leaders; supported and congratulated the fighting peasants of Rajasthan and called upon CITU units and workers for solidarity action.

The farmers Mahapadav was in protest against betrayal by Raje government deviating from written agreement on 13 September with Kisan Sabha on upto Rs.50,000 loan wavers and on other issues in the 11 point charter of demands after AIKS led statewide kisan agitation.

Attack on Minorities in Rajasthan

Findings of Bhumi Adhikar Andolan

A fact finding team of Bhumi Adhikar Andolan visited Bharatpur, Alwar, Rajsamand and Udaipur in Rajasthan on 6-7 January, 2018 to look into the increasing incidents of lynching and attacks in the name of ‘Gau-Raksha’, encounter killings, deliberate communal polarisation and attacks on Muslims in the State.

Bharatpur and Alwar

The BAA delegation that visited Ghatmeeka Village in Bharatpur district met the family of Ummar Khan who was killed by Cow Terrorists. The team found that every household is engaged in dairying and all homesteads have cows, buffaloes or goats from which the people earn their livelihood. In their interaction with the people of the village, community leaders and the elected representatives of the Panchayat; the team found that there was a systematic attempt to brand the entire Muslim community in Mewat region as criminal. Certain elements in the police department are working in connivance with the communal forces to brand villagers belonging to minority community as criminals reminiscent of the British colonial branding of certain tribes as Criminal Tribes. While interacting with the topmost revenue and police officers of Alwar, where the repeated incidents of killing of dairy farmers have taken place, the team found a high degree of prejudice against the minority community. This prejudice and clear bias and religious profiling have led to numerous false cases being filed against dairy farmers as cow smugglers and systematic harassment. The approach of the collector and superintendent of police in Alwar was insensitive and they were carrying forward the narrative of the ‘Gaurakshaks’. It was only a day before the visit of the team that remaining four of the accused in the killing of Ummar Khan was arrested. However, Tahir and Javed who were arrested in the name of cow smuggling in the same case have been languishing in the jail without bail.

In Alwar the family of Talim, a 22 year old who was killed in what they alleged was a fake encounter met the team and explained how he had been shot point-blank and no FIR had been lodged even days after the incident. A series of ‘Gau-Raksha Police Outposts’ in the region also act hand-in-glove with the vigilante groups.

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

State	Centre	Nov. 2017	Dec. 2017	State	Centre	Nov. 2017	Dec. 2017	
AP	GUNTUR	282	281	MHR	MUMBAI	295	293	
	VIJAYWADA	283	281		NAGPUR	317	316	
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	288	287		NASIK	295	295	
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	267	261		PUNE	279	279	
	GUWAHATI	254	251		SHOLAPUR	301	298	
	LABAC SILCHAR	261	261	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	307	304	
	MARIANI JORHAT	249	245		ROURKELA	315	310	
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	248	244	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	311	313	
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	306	301	PUN	AMRITSAR	285	287	
CHD	CHANDIGARH	281	279		JALANDHAR	289	288	
CHS	BHILAI	315	313		LUDHIANA	279	277	
DLI	DELHI	264	263	RJN	AJMER	263	262	
GOA	GOA	297	293		BHILWARA	282	280	
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	273	271		JAIPUR	273	271	
	BHAVNAGAR	269	268	TN	CHENNAI	270	268	
	RAJKOT	275	274		COIMBATORE	272	267	
	SURAT	266	263		COONOR	289	284	
	VADODARA	270	269		MADURAI	286	284	
HRY	FARIDABAD	263	259		SALEM	279	275	
	YAMUNANAGAR	277	275		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	296	289	
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	260	259	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	299	293	
J&K	SRINAGAR	268	271		HYDERABAD	253	251	
JRK	BOKARO	284	283		WARRANGAL	292	290	
	GIRIDIH	312	308	TRP	TRIPURA	269	265	
	JAMSHEDPUR	338	331	UP	AGRA	311	309	
	JHARIA	314	318		GHAZIABAD	288	285	
	KODARMA	332	327		KANPUR	292	292	
	RANCHI HATIA	331	329		LUCKNOW	279	275	
KNT	BELGAUM	299	296		VARANASI	285	283	
	BENGLURU	292	287	WB	ASANSOL	308	309	
	HUBLI DHARWAR	307	305		DARJEELING	265	273	
	MERCARA	305	302		DURGAPUR	315	313	
	MYSORE	301	302		HALDIA	317	315	
KRL	ERNAKULAM	298	297		HOWRAH	276	271	
	MUNDAKKAYAM	304	301		JALPAIGURI	284	278	
	QUILON	331	331		KOLKATA	273	269	
MP	BHOPAL	285	284		RANIGANJ	259	257	
	CHHINDWARA	296	293		SILIGURI	274	268	
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SCHEME WORKERS STATEWIDE STRUGGLES

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Scamster Nirav Modi with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

(In circle)



PNB Scamster Absconder Nirav Modi with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Davos

19 January: Workers-Peasants Solidarity Day

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Andhra Pradesh



Punjab



Kerala



Peasants Agitation in Rajasthan

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Blocking Sikar-Jaipur National Highway