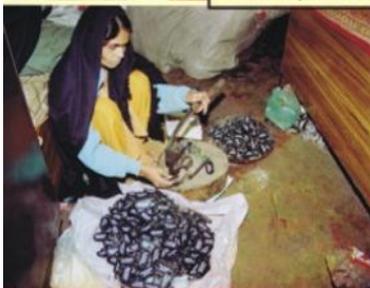
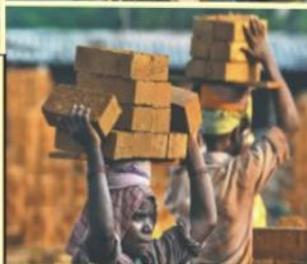


The Voice of the Working Woman



We Build, We Feed
the Nation
United We March
Mazdoor Kisan
Sangharsh Rally
5th September 2018



7 August 2018
All India Transport Sector Strike
Against MV Act Amendment by Modi Government

9 August 2018

Jail Bharo by AIKS and Peasant organisations- CITU will participate
On Quit India Day, 9 August 2018, the peasant organisations under the leadership of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) will organise a Jail Bharo throughout the country. The programme will be held at district headquarters. CITU General Council held at Kozhikode decided that CITU will join the Jail Bharo. AIKS is collecting 10 crore signatures on the demands of peasantry.

14 August 2018

‘Samoochik Jagran’ by CITU

CITU will organise an all night ‘Samoochik Jagran’ all over the country on 14th August, the eve of independence day, on ‘The Dreams of the Independence Movement and Today’. Cultural programmes will be held at different places involving intellectuals, cultural activists etc.

5 September 2018

Worker – Peasant Sangharsh Rally

CITU-AIKS-AIAWU

Preparations are on in full swing. State level workshops are being organised in most of the states. Joint meetings of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU are being held at the state level. District and lower level meetings and conventions are going on.

| <p><i>The Voice</i> of the Working Woman <i>Monthly Journal of the AICWW(CITU)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Editorial Board</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Editor K Hemalata</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Working Editor Ranjana Nirula</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Members A R Sindhu Sunanda Bhattacharya Anju Maini</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Inside</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"><thead><tr><th></th><th style="text-align: center;"><i>Page</i></th><th></th><th style="text-align: center;"><i>Page</i></th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Sangharsh Rally</td><td style="text-align: center;">4</td><td>Assault on Education</td><td style="text-align: center;">18</td></tr><tr><td>Lynch Mobs</td><td style="text-align: center;">8</td><td>MSP for Peasants</td><td style="text-align: center;">19</td></tr><tr><td>Women on the Move</td><td style="text-align: center;">10</td><td>Pearl Distillery</td><td style="text-align: center;">21</td></tr><tr><td>Minimum Wages</td><td style="text-align: center;">14</td><td>India Today</td><td style="text-align: center;">24</td></tr><tr><td>Social Security</td><td style="text-align: center;">16</td><td>Breaking Barriers</td><td style="text-align: center;">26</td></tr></tbody></table> <p style="text-align: center;">Total pages - 28 (including cover pages)</p> | | <i>Page</i> | | <i>Page</i> | Sangharsh Rally | 4 | Assault on Education | 18 | Lynch Mobs | 8 | MSP for Peasants | 19 | Women on the Move | 10 | Pearl Distillery | 21 | Minimum Wages | 14 | India Today | 24 | Social Security | 16 | Breaking Barriers | 26 |
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Policy Change is Necessary

The national capital Delhi has been witness to hundreds and thousands of rallies and demonstrations. But the one that it will experience on 5th September 2018 will be altogether different. For the first time since Independence, the three most important sections of the toiling people of our country that produce the country's wealth, the workers, peasants and agricultural workers, are set to march together in the national capital on that day. This will indeed be a historic rally.

The workers, peasants and agricultural workers will certainly be raising their demands related to their day to day working and living conditions. But more importantly they will also raise their voice against the neoliberal policy regime that has been attacking their livelihoods, their hard won rights and even their Constitutional rights, while ensuring profit maximisation for the big corporates, both domestic and foreign.

The workers, peasants and agricultural workers will not only oppose the neoliberal regime and demand its reversal. They will demand alternative policies that will benefit the vast majority of the common people, the toiling people, not a handful of corporates and landlords.

The working class has been fighting against the impact of neoliberal policies all these years. The trade unions, independently as well as through the joint trade union movement, have conducted 17 country wide strikes, several national level demonstrations and protest actions. In addition there have been many sectoral struggles of almost all sections of workers.

The peasants have also been fighting against the impact of the neoliberal regime on agriculture and on the peasantry. The peasants' organisations, independently as well as from their joint platforms, have led the struggles of farmers at the national level as well as in many states. The agricultural workers too have been fighting on their demands.

However, the struggle for the reversal of the neoliberal regime, which is strongly promoted by the corporates, to whom the parties representing the ruling classes in our country are strongly committed, requires the coming together of all these different streams of struggle. Such unity is all the more necessary to defeat the BJP led Modi government's single minded pursuit of the neoliberal agenda as well as its divisive machinations. In the wake of rising discontent among people against its rule, the BJP and its guide and mentor the RSS, with the help of its various outfits, are set to intensify their attempts to divide the people and disrupt their unity on the basis of religion, caste, region, etc, to weaken struggles and divert people's attention. As the elections to Parliament approach, they have been exhibiting their readiness to stoop to any depths to satiate their hunger for power and to serve their corporate masters.

The '**Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally**' on 5th September is the first step in forging such broader unity of the toiling people. It is to warn the BJP led Modi government that the working class and other sections of working people are no longer ready to tolerate its economic policy onslaughts and its divisive machinations aimed to disrupt their unity.

It will definitely pave the way for more intense and sustained struggles against the anti worker, anti people and anti national neoliberal policies. It should be the beginning of the fight for an alternative pro worker, pro farmer and pro people regime.

Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally on September 5

It is to highlight the issues of crores of workers, peasants, agricultural workers, artisans and other toiling people, to emphatically voice their demands for better work, better working conditions, better lives and better future for their children, that CITU, AIKS and AIAWU have jointly called the '*Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally*' on September 5, 2018 before the parliament. It is to create the confidence among these sections that it is not necessary for them to lead such miserable lives; the confidence that together they can fight and achieve better lives, decent and dignified working and living conditions. The country has the resources. It needs alternative policies. This '*Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally*' is to say NO to the governments that work for the 0.1%. It is to demand policies that benefit the 99.9%. Below we publish some of the issues raised by the rally.

Privatisation

The Narendra Modi government claims to be 'nationalist' and 'patriotic' but it has set a record for sale of national public assets to private tycoons. In four years of its rule, it has sold off a staggering Rs 1.96 lakh crore worth of public sector assets, according to government statistics.

This is not all. They are also trying to sell off mineral resources, land, rivers and lakes, forests and even government schools, health centres and hospitals, to private companies in the name of Public Private Participation (PPP). From defence production to oil production, from medicines to school education – everything is fast turning into privately owned profit making enterprise. Such is their commitment to helping the private corporate class that even historical monuments are being handed over to companies for so called 'maintenance'! Never before has any country seen so much talk of 'nationalism' and 'Motherland' accompanied by shameless sale of the same motherland to profiteers, both domestic and foreign.

This privatisation drive is accompanied by touting India's workers, particularly the young workers, as another commodity that is cheaply available for the same profit hungry corporates. Through their 'Make in India' world tours, Modi and his ministers have been trying to convince global capitalists to invest in India as cheap Indian labour will boost their profits!

Sale of Public Sector

Selling off public sector units to private sector for cheap prices is a well-established policy of all neo-liberal regimes. The preceding Congress-led UPA government had in its ten years of rule sold off some Rs 1.08 lakh crore worth of public sector assets. But this policy has been taken to a new level by Modi sarkar. It has sold off more than what the Congress did in 10 years.

India's central public sector enterprises have gross assets worth over Rs 2 lakh crore, employ over 12.3 lakh workers and had a total declared dividend of over Rs 7095 crore in 2015-16, according to government reports. They are a bulwark for the country's self-reliant economy. The profits generated by these enterprises are used by the government for public benefit. Once they become private, all the profits will simply disappear into pockets of big corporates.

Besides these enterprises, the government is also selling off shares of public sector banks and insurance companies which together employ close to 15 lakh employees. Such dilution will not only allow foreign companies to grab shares of highly profitable government companies. It will also lead to job losses. This is in addition to permission to private (including foreign) banks and insurance companies to operate in the country that was given earlier under the UPA regime.

Selling off public sector shares (or outright sale) has various implications for the people of the country. It means that private companies start sucking out profits through the functioning of the industrial units they acquire. Till now, these units have been contributing to the country's good through their earnings. Private corporates, as we all know, will do no more than fill up their own pockets.

But there is more. The Public sector was also set up in key strategic sectors because the country's sovereignty needed to be protected. For example, in defence production, can you allow private companies like Reliance to take over, in collaboration with foreign companies? Will this not endanger the country's independence and self-reliance?

Then there is the important question of employment and other public policy needs. The public sector not only gives employment to a large number of people but also provides much better wages, social security and other benefits than the private sector. It also follows the constitutional mandate for reservation to SC/STs. All of this goes out of the window once the unit is privatised. There is no real economic or management related reason for disinvestment of public sector. So why is the BJP government led by Modi bent upon pushing it? The answer is two-fold. One, the government gets a whole lot of money with which it pads up its treasury. This is a desperate conspiracy of the government because it has been unable to foster healthy industrial growth, or create jobs. Agriculture continues to be in crisis. Policies like demonetisation and GST have further ruined the economy. The BJP led Modi government thinks that it can tide over this all round crisis by generating revenue through sale of the public sector.

Second, the Modi government is brazenly committed to the wellbeing and prosperity of the big industrialist class – whether domestic or foreign. The prime minister might be talking many things about the welfare of the poor. But the acts of his government are aimed at robbing the poor to serve the corporate class. It is handing over large chunks of people's property – built over the years through public money – to these corporate houses to make profit. 'Nationalism' and 'patriotism' are just for the consumption of common people, so that they forget about all the distress caused by the government.

Natural Resources

It is not just the public sector enterprises that are being sold off to private hands. A quick look around the country will show that practically everything that the government owns – or should be running – is up for sale. From water to mineral resources, from roads and bridges to ports and docks, from schools and colleges to hospitals and dispensaries, everything that should be and has been till recently a government function, is being handed over to the private sector.

The Modi government has pushed ahead with privatising the exploitation of several natural resources of the country ranging from ferrous and non-ferrous minerals, coal, oil and gas, to forests, water bodies and of course power production including hydro-power. Huge profit making public sector bodies like Coal India and National Hydro-Power Corporation (NHPC) are being squeezed out by privatisation. Coal mines have been allowed to be owned and exploited by greedy private companies, which take away profits, convert regular jobs to casual and contractual jobs, violate environmental laws and indiscriminately displace people in order to expand their profits.



Oil and gas fields have already been sold off to big corporates like Reliance by the earlier regime and the Modi government continues to push this anti-national policy further. Last year it was proposed that 18 percent of stake in ONGC will be sold off] potentially getting the government Rs 41,000 crore.

Since the BJP government led by Modi took over, 56,069.37 hectares of forest land have been diverted for projects. Not satisfied with this, the new forest policy proposes to 'develop' forest lands through a public-private partnership (PPP) model which essentially means letting private contractors and real estate developers to grab forest land. The destruction of forests would follow. There is even a proposal to lease out rivers and lakes/ponds to private companies so that they can 'maintain' and 'develop' them!

Schools and Hospitals

Take the example of elementary schools (class 1 to 8). Government schools are being starved of funds. Lakhs of teachers' posts are kept vacant. As a result, there is a decline in the quality of education. About 1 lakh government schools have been closed down by various state governments. Private schools are being given free hand; conditions for opening such 'teaching shops' are being relaxed. As a result, between 2010-11 and 2015-16, the number of students in these classes studying in government schools went down by about 10 percent while those studying in private schools shot up by 26 percent! Fees in private schools are sky high. But parents are compelled to send their children to these schools because they want them to get a better education. In higher education, the share of students studying in private colleges has increased from 61 percent in 2010-11 to 67 percent in 2015-16, with a parallel decline in government colleges.

Hospitals and health centres too have gone down a similar path. Services like medical tests are outsourced by government hospitals to private labs. Patients are forced to buy expensive medicines from private establishments. On the one hand, the government system from primary health centres to tertiary hospitals is made to suffer because of lack of equipment, infrastructure and personnel (including doctors). On the other, more and more private corporate hospitals are encouraged by providing lots of concessions including cheap land. They charge exorbitant fees and are completely out of bounds for the common people. Just as in schools and colleges, people are forced to go to private hospitals because government hospitals lack the necessary infrastructure and staff to satisfy their needs.

The Modi government has in fact gone another step and declared that it will be forcing an insurance based healthcare system on the country. Giving up government's responsibility of providing free and comprehensive healthcare to people, the government is promoting this insurance based model. So, who will benefit from this scheme? Naturally, it is the insurance companies, with crores of rupees flowing into their coffers! Many private insurance companies have entered the health insurance business. This is also a way of privatising what was essentially a duty of the government – to provide healthcare facilities to all.

Railways to Red Fort

The cunning brains that are at work advising Modi Sarkar are busy devising ways of generating profits for private companies. They are determined to do this totally unmindful of the burdens on the people or the impact on our rich architectural heritage. For instance 23 major railway stations are set to be privatised. Private companies will manage these stations and in return they will get full rights to use the space for their promotion, rent out shops and other services, etc. The government has already approved Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in building railway infrastructure. Another example is the decision to handover the maintenance and management of monuments like the Red Fort and Taj Mahal to private companies. Delhi's famous Red Fort and the Golconda

Fort in Telangana have been handed over to Dalmia business group despite objections from prominent historians and archaeologists. Can't the government, so outspoken about 'nationalism' maintain the Red Fort, the symbol of our First War of Independence, the place from where the prime minister of the country unfurls the national flag on Independence Day every year? These measures are a part of the neoliberal policies; this is where neoliberalism leads to. This has to be stopped. This can be stopped. It is only the working class, together with other sections of the toiling people who can stop this.

We want the government to

- Stop privatisation; strengthen public sector; develop self reliant economy
- Strengthen public education; increase public expenditure on education to 6 percent of GDP; improve infrastructure in government schools
- Strengthen public health services; increase public expenditure on health to 5 percent of GDP; improve infrastructure, provide all necessary equipment, staff, medicines etc in community health centres, primary health centres etc; ensure accessible effective, timely health care for all including the adivasis in the remotest corners of the country
- Fill up all vacant teachers' posts in all departments, including in all government educational institutions, government hospitals and health centres

This is possible. We have adequate resources – financial and human. The government has to define its priorities – the people or the corporates? Stop giving huge tax and other concessions to the big domestic and foreign corporates, to the tune of over Rs 5 lakh crore every year; ensure the over Rs 7 lakh crore of legally due taxes evaded by the rich are collected; ensure the over Rs 12 lakh crore of unpaid bank loans, mostly by the big corporates are repaid, take strict action against defaulters.

However, the political parties supporting neoliberalism have never been serious in implementing these alternative policies. It is only the Left parties which have been raising these demands, which have been supporting the struggles on these demands, which have been trying to implement them, within the serious constraints, in the states where they have been in power.

Let us defeat the neoliberal regime; Let us fight for alternative pro-worker, pro- people policies. The 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' before parliament on September 5 is to raise our voice against these policies.

Let us Unite! Fight!

**No to governments that work for the 0.1%
For policies that benefit the 99.9%**



**Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally
5th September 2018**

Hate Them, Kill Them – Lynch Mobs

Kill 27 Across 14 States

The spread of hate, and impunity because there is no punishment for hate violence, is propelling this blood-dimmed tide of lynchings in India.

Subodh Varma

Something has changed in the fabric of Indian society in the past few years. It seems as if a violent, hate-filled black emotion has bubbled up from somewhere deep and is being played out collectively in diverse parts of the country.

There have been 27 deaths by lynching in the past two months, spread across 14 states. This is just the tip of the iceberg because deaths are a serious matter and get reported countrywide. In the vast hinterland, the number of incidents of attempted lynchings – beating of people by mobs – is several orders of magnitude more.

Take Maharashtra, where 5 people belonging to a nomadic tribe were mercilessly beaten to death with sticks, iron rods and stones in Dhule district by a mob of 3500 while eight policemen watched ineffectually. Earlier, similar incidents had taken place in Aurangabad City, Aurangabad Rural and Gondia districts. But reports indicate that 12 districts have reported such violence, not all of which led to deaths of the victims. Similarly, Odisha doesn't yet figure in the map of states where killings have taken place. But the state police have reported 20 cases of mobs beating up people, mostly 'outsiders', that is non-Odia persons.

If you sift through the chilling accounts of lynchings two things appear to be common among most cases – social media and 'outsider', which actually means anybody who is a stranger or talking a different language, or wearing different kind of clothes, or just behaving differently. In most cases, Whatsapp messages, including videos and images of persons, have been identified as spreading rumours about child-lifters. This fear of child abductors on the loose is relatively ancient – there have been sporadic incidents stretching back decades sparked off by such rumours. Obviously, Whatsapp is now the vehicle of choice for extensive spread of such rumours. After all, an estimated 200 million people are using it daily.

But these two factors – fear of the 'other' and its spread by modern communication technology – were also behind a similar spate of lynchings that started after Modi's assumption of power and reached its peak last year. In the past four years there have been 78 incidents of mob attacks and lynchings in the name of cow protection and beef eating, led mostly by Sangh Parivar associated persons. In an expression of collective barbarism, these attacks and killings which caused deaths of 29 people and left 273 injured, were very similar to the current tide of seemingly random mob attacks. Over two thirds of the victims were Muslims and the remaining mostly



Dalits – both communities that are considered 'outsiders' by the RSS in word or deed. The RSS and its wider family, including the BJP, have been carrying out hate filled propaganda against the Muslims for decades and the sudden outburst of the so-called 'cow protection' sentiment was nothing but a deliberate attempt to fan these flames.

It is worth recalling that most of these incidents were sparked off by wild and manufactured rumours of beef eating, cow slaughter, etc. and social media use for such hate-mongering was well known.

Once you realise the continuum between mob lynching of Muslims and Dalits and the current spell of lynching of alleged child-lifters, many other aspects fall into place. The chief amongst them is the fact of growing impunity. In most cases of attacks in the name of 'cow protection' the accused members of the mob either remain unidentified or cases against them are deeply mired in legal skulduggery. In any case, those who incited the mobs of *gaurakshaks* remain at large, untouched by any legal proceedings.

This incendiary sense of impunity of the mob has now come back full circle, though it is being fed by similar rumours, originating and being propagated through similar means. People realise that a mob can get away with murder. And, people also realise that it is just fine to have a weak target, an 'outsider' on whom your deepest fears can be pinned and consummated in the most barbaric form. If you can kill or beat up a fellow resident of the village and get away with it, then what harm will come your way if you kill or beat up an unprotected and innocent 'outsider'.

This is why the incidents of lynching of supposed child lifters and thieves and witches and organ snatchers are happening in unconnected parts of the country but with very similar makings. What is common to different regions is manufactured fear and impunity – both gifts of the present dispensation.

A word also needs to be said about background or not so proximate causes. The country is also going through a phase of increasing economic distress. This is mainly because of ever increasing joblessness or under-employment. After a decade of jobless growth, we have four years of worsening job availability. Farming is in crisis with millions losing money every year and no end in sight. All this gives rise to deep uncertainty, insecurity and resentment because inequality of the most flagrant kind is visible constantly. This is not manufactured hate or fear, it is a simmering, all consuming shadow in the lives of millions. It also leaves people vulnerable, open to misdirection, in fact eager to seek some justice for something close. It is the well-spring from which fears and hate can be easily drawn out and become blood-lust.

There are reports of this or that police officials taking stringent steps in their areas to prevent mob violence. There is talk of stopping internet services to prevent rumours. Then, there are also reports like that of the Tripura BJP minister declaring that an 11-year old boy was killed by people to steal his kidneys, leading to widespread fears of such gangs operating in villages and, two days later three lynchings taking place

As the country fumbles around to find solutions, one is forced to wonder where all those people are who claim to unite the whole society under a single flag and religion. Are they part of the solution, or are they the problem itself?
(Courtesy: Newsclick)

If there is any doubt left about whether BJP-RSS support lynchings, rape, communal violence against minorities and other hate crimes, the series of BJP leaders and elected representatives who have publicly supported criminals accused of such crimes will put it to rest. On 8 July, BJP civil aviation minister Jayant Sinha garlanded eight men convicted of lynching Alimuddin Ansari to death in Jharkhand last year. He attempted to whitewash his odious action by saying that he was "honouring the due process of the law"! Bihar's Hindutva leader and again a minister in Modi's government Giriraj Singh went and met those accused of communal riots in Navada last year. He said that Hindus were being oppressed by the Bihar government, which is supported by his own party.

Earlier, ministers in the PDP-BJP alliance govt. in J&K had openly supported and held a public rally in solidarity with eight persons accused of abducting, raping and murdering an 8-year old girl in Kathua, Jammu. The list of local BJP leaders who have participated or led communal processions leading to attacks on minorities, or defended those who attack Dalits is long and growing.

AIFAWH Demands Day on 10 July 2018

Lakhs of anganwadi workers from 22 states – Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Pondicherry, Rajasthan, Telengana, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal - observed “All India Demands’ Day” at the call of AIFAWH. A joint protest was held on 9 July in Odisha. In Delhi the protest and mobilisation will be held on 20 July.

This year the Demands Day is to ‘Save ICDS’ from dismantling.

To oppose

- Direct Cash Transfer in ICDS!
- the move to stop hot cooked meals in anganwadis!
- the move to introduce nursery schools in place of anganwadis!
- the cut in central share of the ICDS budget from 60% to 25%

The demands are

1. Immediately stop the move to introduce Direct/conditional cash transfers and packaged food in ICDS. No mandatory Aadhar linkage for ICDS services. Stop privatisation of ICDS in any form
2. Universalise and institutionalize ICDS. Rollback the budget cuts in ICDS. Allocate adequate funds for ICDS in the Central Budget.
3. Implement the recommendations of the 45th and 46th Indian Labour Conferences’ recommendations to recognise the anganwadi workers and helpers as workers, pay them minimum wages not less than Rs.18000 per month, Provide them social security including pension not less than Rs.3000 per month.

In spite of heavy rains in many parts of the country, anganwadi workers and helpers gathered in large numbers. They are agitated because the BJP government at the centre, which had promised to ‘increase the wages of the anganwadi workers’ in its election manifesto, had not only violated its promise but also had cut down the budget of ICDS drastically. Now, by introducing direct cash transfer in ICDS in place of supplementary nutrition, nursery schools in place of anganwadis and by handing over the anganwadi centres to corporate and corporate NGOs this government is dismantling the ICDS.

Demonstrations were held in front of the offices of various central government ministers in their constituencies in various places. AIFAWH is collecting signatures on a memorandum to the Prime Minister on these demands. Nearly three crore signatures will be submitted to the Prime Minister.

AIFAWH had started the preparations for its demands day as early in March 2018 and at least six lakh workers will participate in the protest.

On 26 June 2018, the anganwadi federation affiliated to the BMS has given the same call for district level demonstrations on 10 July 2018! It should be noted that the BMS had betrayed the anganwadi workers and helpers by withdrawing from the 2nd September 2015 all India strike for which it had issued a notice along with other anganwadi federations just two days before the strike. The present call was nothing but a face saving exercise among the anganwadi employees who have already deserted the BMS. It has functioning unions in very few states. It had done a similar deceitful exercise to divide the scheme workers in general and anganwadi workers in particular when it had given a call for *Delhi Chalo* just one week after the Mahapadav on 9-11 November 2018. On all the occasions the workers had joined the united struggles, leaving the BMS.

The BMS has issued statements that its leadership had met the BJP President on 1 June 2018 and the anganwadi leaders met him in the last week of June and that Shri Amit Shah had assured them that the government will work on the demands of scheme workers! This is the joke of the year that the President of the BJP, which promised to 'increase the wage of the anganwadi workers' in its 2014 election manifesto, after completing four years of cutting down the ICDS budget and introducing DBT in anganwadis will now "*work on the demands of the anganwadi workers and helpers*".

The overwhelming reaction to the call by AIFAWH reflects the anger among the working class against the communal neoliberal government.

Anganwadi workers and helpers will participate in the 'Jail Bharo' on 9th August 2018, being organised by the AIKS and CITU. On 14th August 2018 night, AIFAWH members will join the 'Samoochik Jagran' by CITU with a slogan "Freedom from malnutrition, illiteracy and ill health" AIFAWH has also decided to mobilize fifty thousand anganwadi workers and helpers on 5th September 2018 in Delhi for the Worker-Peasant Sangharsh Rally.

WB State Convention of Working Women

The West Bengal State Working Women's convention was held on 15 July 2018 at Shramik Bhawan Kolkata. More than three hundred working women delegates representing fifteen sectors – anganwadi, municipal workers, manab sampad, ASHA workers, Mid Day Meal workers, Jute mill, construction, electricity, beedi, BSNL contract workers, LIC agents, Medical representatives, Hawkers and vendors, zari workers, and transport participated.

A R Sindhu, Secretary CITU and Convenor AICCWW(CITU) inaugurated the convention. She spoke about the CITU perspective on the coordination committee of working women and how it is necessary in the present situation in the country. She greeted the fighting comrades of West Bengal who brave the repression of the state while fighting for the cause of the working class. Ratna Dutta, convenor state CCWW placed the report. Sixteen delegates participated in the discussion. They narrated the problems faced by women workers in their sectors.

Subhash Mukherjee, President CITU, hoisted the flag. Gargi Chatterjee welcomed the delegates and placed the condolence resolution. The proceedings were conducted by a presidium consisting of Gargi Chatterjee, Madhumita Bandhopadhyaya, Neelima Maitra, Nisha Roy and Tagar Dey .

Anadi Sahoo, General Secretary, state CITU greeted the convention.

The convention formed a three tier committee of working women in which the working committee tier has 37 members including representatives of various unions and district committees. Ratna Dutta was elected as the convenor.

The convention adopted a charter of demands on the basis of which the state committee will conduct a campaign throughout the state.



Haryana ASHA Workers Continue Struggle



On 16 July over 10,000 ASHA workers occupied the main market square in Karnal, which is in the constituency of the Chief Minister. They were demanding implementation of the agreement arrived at with the Haryana government in February. They came from all corners of the state, angry that even after 6 months of the settlement being arrived at, the notification regarding this has not been issued by the government.

In January after a 16 day strike by the ASHA workers, the Haryana government had agreed to increase the fixed monthly remuneration by Rs 3000, to increase the incentives and some other demands, so the strike was withdrawn. However, the government did not implement this agreement till June so the ASHA workers went on strike again on 7 June. On 15 June, during the strike, the government gave the minutes of the meeting, assured early implementation of the agreement and appealed to the ASHA workers to withdraw the strike, which the ASHA workers agreed to do. However, another month passed without the government notification.

When a delegation of the ASHA workers union, led by Surekha, union general secretary met the authorities on 16 July they were assured that the notification was ready and were urged to end their mahapadav. However, after having been given many such assurances in the past, which have not been fulfilled, the ASHA workers refused to be fobbed off with any more false promises. They decided to go on an indefinite strike once again. Now they have all returned to their districts and are sitting on dharna at the district headquarters in every district. They are determined to continue their strike until the government notification is issued and implemented.

Anganwadi Class for Hindi States

The All India Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Federation (AIFAWH) organized a 5 day class for the anganwadi workers and helpers in Hindi speaking states from 27 June to 1 July, 2018 at Kisan Bhawan Chandigarh, in which 90 anganwadi employees from 11 states, participated.

The class was inaugurated by Hemalata, President (CITU) on 27th June 2018. She explained present day conditions and also about the detailed future programmes. The 2nd session was addressed by Usha Rani, President of AIFAWH and secretary CITU who exposed government policies regarding ICDS and reported the union struggles to reverse its attacks.

On the 2nd day Surekha, Secretary Haryana CITU and General Secretary Haryana Asha Workers Union took the class on "The Evolution of Society and the Status of Women." The participants took interest and asked questions which Surekha replied to their satisfaction.

In the 2nd session the General Secretary of AIFAWH and CITU secretary A R Sindhu dealt with the topic of "Capitalism and Exploitation," through a power point presentation. Through their questions it was evident that the participants took this session seriously.

The 3rd session on "Aims and Objects of CITU" was also taken by Com Sindhu.

On 29th June both sessions were addressed by Prof. Dr. Subhash of Kurukshetra University. The 1st session was on "Communalism in India" and 2nd session on "Caste and Class and our

Work.” Dr. Subhash explained the topics in detail, giving relevant facts and figures. It was an eye opener for the participants . He explained how we have to differentiate between religion and communalism, and how and why caste came into being.

On 30th July AIFAWH Secretary Kishori Verma took a class on “My Anganwadi – My Village” She explained how by strong agitations we can organize other sections and strengthen our movement further. The 2nd session was taken by Usha Rani on “Organization” in which she explained the weakness of the organization in detail. She elaborated on the issues of discipline , membership, financial discipline and also the behaviour of the members as well as of the leaders.

On the last day “Todays task and planning” was the topic taken by A.R. Sindhu . She helped the participants to learn how to plan by understanding the issues in depth. The participants made plans for their districts, about making the union strong and also for participation in the 5th September rally in large numbers. They also decided to collect signatures on the issues addressed to the PM and to participate large numbers on 10th July Demands Day programme.

Along with the class the participants were asked to perform on different issues. They were divided into teams and given 5 topics for making a small skit. They produced very effective skits in the short period available . They wrote songs and sang them.

They were asked to tell their plan for next 6 months. The purpose behind this was to make them think about themselves because these days women have forgotten to do this . The replies included strengthening their organization, reading books, learning to drive a vehicle , to organize eunuchs , to complete their studies etc.

All the participants were given certificates by AIFAWH on the last day . The President of the Federation thanked Punjab state committee, and the participants resolved to further expand and strengthen the organisation.

Victory for ASHA Workers in Andhra Pradesh

The ASHA workers in Andhra Pradesh have finally emerged victorious after a decade long struggle. They have conducted the most militant and long drawn out struggles for the past ten years, but were not able to achieve their major demands. They had conducted numerous marches to the capital, sat on dharna at District Collectorate, faced arrest and lathi charge, but they never gave up their struggle for their justified demands.

The AP state ASHA workers union again announced its decision to go on strike and started to make intensive preparations for it between 4th and 9th July. All the 40,000 workers in the state were determined to go on strike and make it a total one.

The Chief Minister of AP intervened to resolve the issue and held discussions with a delegation of the ASHA workers, led by K Dhanalakshmi, General Secretary of the ASHA workers union. The Chief Minister announced that Rs 3000 per month would be paid along with incentives of not less than Rs 3000. He also promised that eligible ASHA workers would be considered for second ANM posts, the retirement age would be 60 years, wages would be paid through the bank, etc. The circular regarding the enhanced incentives has already been issued.





Minimum Wages

**Minimum wage of not less than Rs 18000!
For all workers including scheme workers!
Link minimum wage with Consumer Price Index!**

Because of the ever rising prices, the family budgets of workers across the country, in all sectors, are being squeezed. Whatever meagre increases they achieve through their struggles are offset

by the rising prices. In effect, this means that for the same money workers are able to buy less and less amounts of the commodities.

The situation has become even more difficult for the lakhs of contract and casual workers who are not even paid the statutory minimum wages. Their wages are not even linked to the consumer price index (CPI). In many places workers are so desperate that they are forced to take up two jobs. They are compelled to work for 10 – 12 hours, at normal wage rates - not double wages as stipulated for over time – just to make ends meet. Such a harsh exploitation has blown away the concept of 8 hour working day for many in our country.

On the other hand, big corporate houses, both domestic and foreign, continue to reap super profits. They seek to maintain their profits by cutting down the 'cost' of labour – by reducing the number of workers, increasing their work load, reducing or 'freezing' wages, by contractorisation. The government, instead of providing relief to the workers, is dancing to the tune of the monopolies and corporates like the Ambanis, Adanis, Tatas and Birlas etc. It receives directions from the industry bodies like the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) etc., even while they are not willing to even meet the representatives of the workers.

Since 2016 the joint trade union movement has been demanding minimum wage of Rs 18000 per month. All the trade unions are also demanding that the minimum wage should be linked to the CPI.

How is it justified? The Seventh Pay Commission for the central government employees appointed by the BJP led government has recommended Rs 18000 as minimum wage. According to the Seventh Pay Commission, this was based upon the formula unanimously adopted by the 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) and the directions of the Supreme Court in the Raptakos and Brett case, which was reiterated by the 44th ILC in 2012 and again by the 46th ILC in 2015

The formula evolved by the 15th ILC for fixing minimum wage and the Supreme Court directions are as follows:

- 1) Per capita food intake of at least 2700 calories for a worker's family comprising three units (2 adults and 2 children)
- 2) Per capita cloth of at least 18 yards per annum
- 3) Provision of housing as per minimum rent charged by government industrial housing scheme for low-income category
- 4) Fuel, lighting, miscellaneous expenditures to constitute 20 per cent of the total minimum wage.
- 5) The Supreme Court Judgment (1992) stipulated additional 25 per cent of the minimum wage for education, medical expense, recreation and provision of old age and marriage to be taken into account while fixing minimum wage.

The Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers has challenged this recommendation on the grounds that the minimum wage should be Rs 26000 on the basis of the ILC recommendation and Supreme Court directions at the prices prevalent in 2015

However, the BJP led government has accepted the recommendation of the Seventh Pay Commission and decided the minimum wage of Rs 18000 for the central government employees.

The ILC recommendations and Supreme Court directions for minimum wages are the same for all workers and employees. Prices are the same for everybody. In fact, prices of almost all essential commodities and services, particularly food, clothing, transport and medicines have considerably increased since 2015.

Hence, the demand of Rs 18000 minimum wage is absolutely justified. The government should immediately concede the demand.

But what is the government doing?

Instead of accepting the just demand of the workers and amending the Minimum Wages Act accordingly, the BJP led government has introduced the Code on Wages Bill in the Lok Sabha, amalgamating the Minimum Wages Act, the Payment of Wages Act, The Bonus Act and the Equal Remuneration Act. In fact this is an attempt to remove wage fixation from the ambit of labour laws altogether.

This Wage Code Bill leaves fixation of minimum wages to the discretion of the government, the central government and the state governments. It provides for the constitution of a Minimum Wage Advisory Board. But the recommendations of the boards are not binding on the governments.

The Wage Code Bill totally ignores the unanimous recommendations of the ILC and the directions of the Supreme Court on the criteria for fixing the minimum wage.

It reiterates the atrocious provision of deducting eight days' wages for one day strike, if the strike is declared 'illegal'. If the draft Industrial Relations Code Bill, another atrocious draft amending labour laws, becomes an Act, then almost all strikes can be declared 'illegal'.

The provisions on enforcement of minimum wages including regular payment of wages are highly diluted that all the other provisions will be rendered totally meaningless. Whatever teeth the erstwhile Payment of Wages Act, the Minimum Wages Act, the Equal Remuneration Act and the Payment of Bonus Act had, are all diluted to the extent that enforcement of law will become a casualty. Employers will be empowered to violate the law as per their will.

What is even shameful is the reply of the Labour Ministry of this BJP government led by Modi to a specific question why the consensus recommendation of Indian Labour Conference on the minimum wage formula was not incorporated in the Code on Wages Bill. It said that this was done to 'provide for flexibility, adaptability and to cater for dynamic requirements of various components...' Is any more proof required for the government's intent on whose interests it wants to serve, the employers or the workers?

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

The 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' before Parliament on 5th September is to demand:

Minimum wages for all workers, wherever they work, in the factories, offices, mines, agricultural fields or forests. It is to demand the reversal of these policies that starve the toiling people to feed the big corporates.



Universal Social Security for All Workers

We want universal social security, that is, social security for all workers, wherever they might be working.

Today a very small section of workers, mainly in the organised sector only are covered by social security benefits like provident fund, ESI, medical benefits, maternity benefit, accident compensation, gratuity, pension etc. Given the tardy enforcement mechanism, encouraged by the governments themselves, even fifty percent of the workers in the organised sector, particularly the contract workers, are also

deprived of their legitimate social security benefits.

Despite contributing to over 60 percent of the country's GDP, the unorganised sector workers do not get any social security benefits. Some segments of the unorganised sector workers like the beedi workers, construction workers, mine workers, cine workers etc are of course statutorily entitled to some social security benefits. But not even 30% of these workers are covered in practice because of the total absence of effective enforcement machinery for these schemes, either at the central level or in the states.

Ensuring 'ease of doing business' for the employers has become a priority under the neoliberal policies. For the present Modi led BJP government, this appears to be the determining factor of government policy. Enforcement of labour laws is the first casualty of such a policy. During the last one and a half decade, hardly 25% of the fund collected through cess for the construction workers' welfare scheme was spent on providing benefits to the construction workers. The situation related to beedi workers and others is not much different.

The BJP led government's high decibel advertisements proclaim that its Code on Social Security is going to cover the entire workforce including the rickshaw pullers and domestic workers.

But cover with what? There is no answer. No specific social security scheme is proposed.

Who will be covered exactly? Establishments will have to be registered for the workers to be covered. The threshold number of workers will be decided by the government. What will be the threshold level? This BJP government has raised the threshold level of employment under the Factories Act to 40. That means that more than 72 percent of factory workers who were being covered by the Factories Act will now be thrown out. Will the factories with less than 40 workers be eligible for registration under the Code on Social Security? Will the workers of these establishments be eligible for whatever benefits are provided under this Code? No answer.

What is clear is that the government is not contributing a single paisa for social security for the workers. (Except of course spending some thousands of crores of rupees on advertisements, to secure its own future and to benefit the owners of corporate media) Unorganised workers will have to contribute at the rate of 12.5% of their wages for the social security benefits. If the employers are not identifiable, the workers are categorised as self employed and they have to contribute 20% of their earnings.

15 existing social security legislations –

- Employees State Insurance Act
- Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, the
- Employees Compensation Act
- Maternity Benefits Act
- Payment of Gratuity Act
- Unorganised Workers Social Security Act
- Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act
- Beedi Workers Welfare Cess Act
- Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act

- Iron Ore Mines, Manganese Ore Mines and Chrome Ore Mines Labour Welfare Cess Act
- Iron Ore Mines, Manganese Ore Mines and Chrome Ore Mines Welfare Fund Act
- Mica Mines Labour Welfare Cess Act, the
- Limestone and Dolomite Mines Labour Welfare Fund Act
- Cine Workers Welfare Cess Act and
- Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act, - are amalgamated into this Code on Social Security.

The entire fund with the existing central funds like the EPF, ESI, CMPF, Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Fund etc, amounting to around Rs 12 lakh crore, along with the huge amount that will be collected from the unorganised workers and self employed, will be placed at the disposal of the National Council of Social Security, to be chaired by the Prime Minister. There will be an advisory Board to advise the National Council of Social Security. But this will not be strictly tripartite in composition. It is deliberately meant to undermine trade unions' representation. This will then be made available for speculation in the share market to satisfy the finance capital lobby.

But while hijacking the entire fund vested in 15 Social Security schemes as per the legislations, the Social Security Code has not specified anything on the social security benefit that would be delivered to workers. The government may leave that to be decided by bureaucrats through rules, once the legislation on Social Security Code is passed by Parliament. But the net results of the entire exercise would be that even the guaranteed social security benefits under EPF, ESI, Construction Workers Welfare Scheme, Beedi Workers Welfare Scheme being delivered through concerned organisations will stand dismantled and demolished. The Social Security Code proposed by the government does not ensure at all the continuity of those benefits under the proposed Code – a novel exercise of deception and fraud!

Is the Social Security Code A Social Protection or Blatant Deception?

Remember, the erstwhile UPA government had enacted the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act in 2009. No new social security benefit had been formulated under that Act; neither during the tenure of the UPA government nor under the present BJP led Modi government. No funds were allotted for the social security schemes under this Act; either by the then UPA government or by the present BJP government. Only some already existing social security schemes, most of them meant for BPL people were made applicable to the unorganised workers. The present government made even the National Social Security Board constituted under the Act totally non functional. Some of the old schemes were discontinued and launched with new names.

Cutting down social welfare expenditure and pampering the big corporates, big business and finance capital – is the hallmark of neoliberal policies. And this BJP government led by Modi can stoop down to any level of fraud and deception to befool the people while serving their corporate masters. The Social Security Code is an exemplarily dubious exercise in that direction.

What is Actually Required?

If the government is really serious of providing social security benefits to all workers, it has to:

- Strengthen the existing social security schemes under the concerned legislations; take stringent measures to ensure their effective implementation
- Widen the coverage to all entitled workers under the concerned legislations; today social security schemes like EPF, ESI and the other 13 do not cover even 50 percent of the workers legally entitled to these benefits
- Put in place a government funded comprehensive social security scheme ensuring health care including maternity, accident protection, superannuation for pension, children's education etc for all other sections of working people including agricultural workers and peasants, with a token contribution just to facilitate enrolment

This is possible. We have adequate resources. What is required is the will to formulate policies to serve the people and not the corporate-business nexus.

The 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' before parliament on September 5 is to demand such effective social security for all working people; to warn the BJP led Modi government that policies aimed at dismantling existing and functional social security schemes and legislations will not be tolerated

Assault on Education

The news about the legislations being brought forth to abolish the University Grants Commission (UGC) and to set-up a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) has brought into sharp focus the assault on education and, in particular, higher education, that is taking place under the Modi government. The various steps taken in the sphere of education are motivated by a twin motive – neoliberalism and Hindutva ideology. The drive for privatisation of education and corporatisation of higher education is being speeded up, while public funded education is being curtailed and downgraded. On the other hand, there is a concerted effort to introduce the Hindutva agenda and ideology in higher educational institutions, even if this involves using coercion and repression to bring recalcitrant institutions, teachers and students in line.

As far as the HECI is concerned, it is no one's argument that the UGC was doing a good job and that it was playing a vital role in developing and nurturing higher education. But the remedy suggested is worse than the disease.

The HECI will be a government nominated body with inconsequential representation of academics. Moreover, there will be an advisory council with the HRD minister as the chairperson which will guide the HECI. This ensures direct control of the government over the new body and through it higher education.

Further, the distribution of funds to universities and colleges which was earlier vested with the UGC, will now be entrusted with the HRD ministry. This will be a direct instrument to control higher education and to police the universities and colleges. Whatever semblance of autonomy, which was there in the UGC Act, has been done away with.

The restructuring of the regulatory authority in higher education has been accompanied by other measures such as the setting up of a Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA). The aim is to replace grants given by the government with loans given by HEFA. Loans taken for infrastructural development will add to the burden on the institutions and eventually on the students.

The manner in which "Institutions of Eminence" were chosen has glaringly exposed the pro-corporate bias being introduced into higher education. The privilege accorded to the proposed Jio Institute to be set-up by Reliance Foundation is a brazen instance of how big corporates are going to call the shots in the "new educational order".

Overall, the neo-liberal measures begun by the previous UPA government are being accelerated with centralisation, commercialisation and privatisation as the driving force.

This will result in the decay and destruction of the public funded educational system. This is being accentuated by the targeting and destruction of institutions like the Jawaharlal Nehru University which is anathema for the Sangh Parivar.

Simultaneously, the Hindutva agenda is being imposed on the educational system. RSS men have been made vice chancellors of universities, with their sole qualification being loyalty to the Sangh. The BJP state governments have taken various steps to communalise the school syllabus and text books. The HRD ministry has announced that a Vedic Education Board will be set-up on the lines of the CBSE. This will be a parallel schooling system based on Vedic studies and Sanskrit. Projects and research on 'cow-science' and pseudo-science are being funded by various government bodies and by institutes like the IIT, Delhi.

So what is emerging is a toxic fusion of neoliberalism and Hindutva in education. For the students, the prospects are of escalating fees and inaccessibility of entry into institutions of higher education and a general deterioration in the standards of public school education.

The resistance to the twin onslaught on education is growing. It is necessary to mobilise students, teachers and all concerned citizens to unitedly oppose the Modi government's retrograde educational policies. The defence of a secular, scientific, mass educational policy must be the centre-piece of this fight back.

INCREASE IN MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE FOR THE PEASANTS? Betrayal of Peasants with Deception Again

Before the 2014 Lok Sabha election, the BJP and the present prime minister Narendra Modi had promised to the peasants of the country to implement Swaminathan Committee's recommendation on Minimum Support Price (MSP), but had gone back from that promise after coming to power. After long four years, on 4 July, 2018, the BJP government, with much fanfare announced MSP for Kharif crops for the financial year 2018-2019 touting it as cost+50% and its being 'historic'. In a statement the same day, **the All India Kisan Sabha** condemned it as 'historic betrayal' of the peasants.

The government calculated cost as A2+FL where A2 stands for farmer's out of pocket expenses on inputs like seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation, hired labour, hired machinery etc and FL stands for cost of unpaid family labour. Whereas the Swaminathan committee recommended Comprehensive Cost as C2 which includes A2+FL+ rentals / interests on own land and fixed capital.

Interestingly, costs of industrial production of goods and services include *land, labour, capital, and enterprise*.

According to the calculation by the Commission for Agricultural Cost and Prices (CACP) itself there are vast differences between the government-announced MSP and the actual amount if it would have been, based on Swaminathan Committee's recommendation as shown below.

| Crop | A2+FL/ Quintal | C2/ Quintal | MSP (2018-19) / Quintal | C2+50% | Difference Between C2+50 & MSP/ Quintal |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--------|--|
| | CACP Costs for 2018-19 | | | | |
| Paddy | 1166 | 1560 | 1750 | 2340 | -590.0 |
| Jowar Hybrid | 1619 | 2183 | 2430 | 3274.5 | -844.5 |
| Bajra | 990 | 1324 | 1950 | 1986 | -33.0 |
| Ragi | 1931 | 2370 | 2897 | 3555 | -658.0 |
| Maize | 1131 | 1480 | 1700 | 2220 | -520.0 |
| Arhar | 3432 | 4981 | 5675 | 7471.5 | -1796.5 |
| Moong | 4650 | 6161 | 6975 | 9241.5 | -2266.5 |
| Urad | 3438 | 4989 | 5600 | 7483.5 | -1883.5 |
| Groundnut | 3260 | 4186 | 4890 | 6279 | -1389 |
| Sunflower Seed | 3592 | 4501 | 5388 | 6751.5 | -1363.5 |
| Soyabean | 2266 | 2972 | 3399 | 4458 | -1059.0 |
| Sesamum | 4166 | 6053 | 6249 | 9079.5 | -2830.5 |
| Nigerseed | 3918 | 5135 | 5877 | 7702.5 | -1825.5 |
| Cotton (Med. Staple) | 3433 | 4514 | 5150 | 6771 | -1621.0 |

(From: AIKS statement)

It is clear from above, even based on the enhanced MSP announced by the government, farmers will be facing a loss on all the Kharif crops, ranging from Rs 590 to Rs 1825.5 per quintal and the Modi Government's claim of huge benefit to the farmers is nothing but a total fraud on the people.

The AIKS statement also said that there is huge disparity in cost calculation by central agencies and the state agricultural departments, centrally determined costs being much lower; and both are below farmers' actual costs. The MSP recommended by state governments (including BJP ruled states) based on their cost calculations are much higher than MSP announced by the Central government.

The AIKS also pointed out that no step has been taken to ensure assured procurement. Without assured procurement throughout the country, any such announcement is only notional. Public procurement is taking place only in a few crops like paddy and wheat and that too below 20% of total production. In most other crops there is no procurement in most states.

The tall claim by the Modi government of benefitting the farmers through enhancement of MSP of Kharif crops is nothing but a fraud and deception of the people at large.



Pearl Distillery Company Workers in Conditions of Slavery

Singarayakonda in Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh is located on the highway between Vijayawada and Chennai. People travelling on this route confront a strong pungent smell on the Munner, just after crossing this town. The nauseating smell lingers on for some time. This smell emanates from the Pearl Distillery Company located in Singarayakonda.

Recently the workers of this factory went on strike against harassment and demanding improvement in their working conditions.



Pearl Distillery Company was established in 1997 by Magunta

Subbaramireddy who was once a Member of Parliament from the Congress. He belongs to a prominent political and industrial family of the region. Since the last two decades his son, Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy is running the factory. He too was a Member of Parliament from Congress earlier but now he is a Member of Legislative Council from the Telugu Desam Party.

Around 1500 workers, 1200 of them women, work in this distillery factory. They come to work from many villages in the six mandals around Singarayakonda. Initially the factory worked with 5 lines. Now it has 65 lines. The initial investment was Rs 60 crores. Now its income has increased to Rs 1200 crores. The workers were paid Rs 30 per day in the beginning. Their wages were increased by Rs 5 to Rs 12 per year. While the profits of the company surged, the workers are not paid even minimum wages. The minimum wage in the state is Rs 365 per day. But the workers are paid only Rs 230 – Rs 260 a day.

Chalama Reddy is the contractor who has been recruiting workers for the factory since 1997. Initially he was going from one village to the other on his bicycle to recruit workers from the villages. He lived in a rented house. How he moves in a car. He has three triple storied buildings on the main road. His children are studying in foreign countries. But the workers continue to live the same miserable lives.

In the initial days, he used to beg the workers to work overtime. The workers used to work up to 10.00 in the night. They cook dinner after going home and are able to go to sleep only after midnight. Again, they have to get up by 5 o'clock in the morning, prepare food for the family and leave by 7.30 for work. The management promised to pay overtime wages for working after 8.00 p.m. The workers are compelled to work overtime for 3 hours every day but are paid only a meagre Rs 20 for this.

The women workers clean the bottles, check the labels and pack them in cartons. 41 workers work on a line. Often they get injured while cleaning the bottles. But the management does not

care. They are not taken to the hospital. They are not even provided first aid. They work under CCTV surveillance. They are not allowed to talk to one another. They can't afford to look away from the bottles even for a second, because that may result in the bottles in the line breaking and the workers losing their job. They are not provided with any chairs; they are not allowed to sit. The workers allege that they are not treated as humans.

The workers are given tea once in a day. They have a half hour lunch break. They have to use the washroom only during this break. They have to do biometric recording even for going to the washroom. They are not allowed to go to the washroom at any other time even when unavoidable. They are compelled to ease themselves at the working place. The workers were in tears narrating their plight during their monthly menstrual periods.

PF is not implemented for most of the workers. Many do not even know whether they are covered or not. A woman worker who has been working since 1997 went on leave to attend to her son who had a dog bite. When she came back to work after a few days, she was registered as a new appointee. Many others faced a similar situation. Those who side with the management are provided better benefits. Others are abused and ill treated.

Recently the workers formed a union and announced that they would not be working overtime. They started a strike on 28th March which continued for 19 days. The management tried to utilise the labour department to break the strike, but without success. The workers stood united and firm. Ultimately the management had to climb down and assure that the statutory minimum wage would be implemented. But no action has yet been taken against those who have abused women workers. Around 400 workers were removed from service during the strike. The struggle to ensure implementation of the assurances and for the reinstatement of the workers has to continue. CITU extended all support to the workers in their struggle.

P Kalpana
(Prakasam district Coordination Committee of Working Women)

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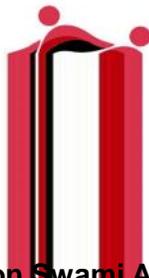
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Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan

(National platform of mass, class, social and cultural organizations, groups and progressive individuals)



Press Release

New Delhi, 18th July 2018

**JEJAA strongly condemns the attack on Swami Agnivesh by RSS- BJP fringe elements
Demands action against the guilty and open apology by Prime Minister
Bring comprehensive Law to curb mob violence
Calls for Evening Protest Dharna on 19th July 2018**

Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (JEJAA) strongly condemns the brutal attack on social activist Swami Agnivesh by BJYM-ABVP activists in Pakur district in BJP ruled Jharkhand, yesterday, 17 July 2018. He was there to attend a programme organized by one indigenous tribal's organisation. It is shocking that although the organizers have informed the police about the programme and a so-called protest was organized by the Bharatiya Janata Yuva morcha there, there was no police present there to stop the attack.

This attack is the latest in the series of murders of rationalists, mob lynchings and physical assault of activists by these Hindu communal fanatics. The latest attack on Swami Agnivesh sounds like a conspiracy by RSS which needs to be exposed through a judicial enquiry.

It is all the more shocking that the BJP spokesperson gave a statement that 'given the track record of Swami Agnivesh, this 'reaction' has not come as a surprise'. It must be recalled that social activist Jean Dreze was publically heckled during his speech by the BJP's Minister for Agriculture of Jharkhand.

JEJAA demands that the guilty must be booked immediately and strong action must be taken against them and action should be taken against the police officers for their failure.

This incident is yet another example of the state sponsored actions of intolerance and attacks on the fundamental rights of freedom of expression of the citizens of the country with a great tradition. The Hindutva forces are not even averse to attack a 'sanyasi' in saffron since he/she refuses to preach their ideology. The Prime Minister owes an apology for his silence on this attack.

The Supreme Court has directed that the Parliament must make a new law treating mob lynching as a separate crime which denotes the failure of the Modi Government to protect the life of citizens.

JEJAA calls upon the citizens of the country to protest against the RSS- BJP propagated mob violence to suppress voices of dissent. No citizen is safe under Modi Raj.

JEJAA calls upon all its member organizations to organize an Evening Protest Dharna on 19th July 2018.

Issued by

Hannan Mollah, For the Working Committee

Teacher Arrested Over Transfer Request

A teacher who asked for a transfer to Dehradun after 25 years of working in a far flung area, to be with her children after her husband's death in 2015, was turned away by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Rawat. She was suspended and even arrested on charges of shouting and misbehaving at a public meeting.

Uttara Bahuguna, the 57-year-old teacher who paid heavily for her argument with the Chief Minister at his public interaction on June 28, has been working at a school in Uttarkashi for 25 years and is desperate to shift to Dehradun.

Ms Bahuguna had met the Chief Minister once before, when she told him after so many years at a remote outpost, she wanted to live with her children. *"I don't want my children to be orphans in Dehradun. My situation is such that I can't leave my children or the job,"* she told him. The back-and-forth grew heated as Ms Bahuguna insisted that the Chief Minister give her justice.

"I never signed up for exile all my life," Ms Bahuguna said. Annoyed, the Chief Minister asked her to *"mind her language"* and then shouted, *"Suspend karo ise abhi (Suspend her immediately). Arrest her."*

In a video clip, the teacher is seen shouting at the Chief Minister *"thief, cheats"* as she is led out of the meeting.

Uttara Bahuguna was arrested on charges of "disrupting an important gathering" and suspended immediately. She was let off in the evening.

As it turns out, Mr Rawat's wife, also a teacher, managed a transfer from a tough region within four years and has been in Dehradun continuously for 22 years.

An RTI or Right to Information query has revealed that Sunita Rawat started working at a primary school in Paudi Gadhwal in 1992. In 1996, she was transferred to Dehradun and has never been transferred since then, even after a promotion in 2008.

(Courtesy – NDTV)

1.2 lakh Indian Kids with TB in 2016, the Most in the World

India aims to win its war on TB by 2025, but the goal seems too far-fetched. With an estimated 1.2 lakh detections, India reported the highest number of childhood TB cases (0-14 years) in



2016, according to a report presented on Wednesday by the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease at the World Health Assembly in Geneva. China, second on the list, reported less than half of India's incidence, leaving little room for the population argument.

The report, 'The Silent Epidemic: A Call to Action Against Child TB', stated that less than 2% of the 3.6 lakh children with latent TB in India who are eligible for preventive therapy as per WHO guidelines actually got it. An estimated one million children the world over develop TB every year,

of whom nearly one in four dies. The report said a staggering 90% of children suffering from TB worldwide are left untreated and India is no exception.

The crisis is underlined by the fact that despite childhood TB accounting for 10% of the overall incidence, it contributes to 16% of deaths globally. The findings assume significance given that TB would be discussed for the first time by heads of state at the UN General Assembly in September.

“Within global public health, it is an open secret that health systems neglect children with TB because children are less contagious than adults, and because the standard tools used to diagnose TB work less well in children. Many governments, therefore, classify children as a low priority,” said Dr Paula Fujiwara, scientific director of the union. She said children with TB rarely die, including those suffering from the multi-drug resistant form, when they get the standard treatment on time.

(Courtesy – The Times of India)

Cops leave ‘Justice’ to Public

Hostage taker Rohit Singh, who allegedly stabbed a model and held her confined in her bedroom for 12 hours in Bhopal on Friday, was given a taste of public ‘justice’ by the Bhopal police.

Cops paraded Rohit in public in Misrod on Saturday, and egged on people to whack him. Archana Sapre, a resident of the township where the rescued hostage lives, said that the police had informed them about the parade in advance.

Residents, mostly women, lined up on the road with sticks, sandals and black paint. Rohit was brought in and the crowd was allowed to have a go at him.

While this mob justice was playing out, the hostage lay in ICU, with an oxygen mask over her face.

(Courtesy – The Times of India)

India Most Dangerous Country for Women

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria come later in list

India has been ranked as the most dangerous country out of the world’s 10 worst countries for women, behind Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia, according to a poll conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The same poll conducted in 2011 had placed India at the fourth place. The findings are based on perceptions of experts on women’s issues.

India was followed by Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Nigeria and U.S.A — in that order.

“The world’s second most populous nation, with 1.3 billion people, ranked as the most dangerous on three of the topic questions — the risk of sexual violence and harassment against women, the danger women face from cultural, tribal and traditional practices, and the country where women are most in danger of human trafficking including forced labour, sex slavery and domestic servitude,” according to the Foundation.

(Courtesy – The Hindu)

‘Golden’ Girl Hima Das Smashed Liquor Vends as well

Hima Das, 18 years old girl of Assam, has made history. She has made the country proud by winning a gold medal in the women’s 400 meter race in the Under-20 Athletics Junior Championships held in Tampere, Finland on July 12. After the victory, Hima Das said, *“I am very happy to catch the flag of India on my shoulders. 100 meters is my strength. Now my target is Asian Games. But my dream is to win in the Olympics.”*

Hima took 51.46 seconds to win the final.

Hima had shared her ‘winning mantra’ with her friends while in Guwahati for the 58th National Interstate Senior Athletic Championship -*‘I don’t care about medals. What I care about is if I am being able to improve my timing. That’s probably the only thing I am afraid of : Time. I am not running after gold medals. I am running after time. Once I get that, gold medals will run after me.’*

It takes years to master the quarter mile and that progress at the highest level is painfully slow. Incredibly, Hima Das has proved this wrong. For someone who took to the 400 metres race just



this year and who ran her first individual race as recently as in March, the 18-year-old from Assam has produced one stunning performance after another. So much so that her World Under-20 championships gold in Finland on Thursday night did not exactly come as a surprise. It is a remarkable tale because Indians have never done well in sprints on the global stage. It is in Hima’s strong run that the country has made a breakthrough in a track event.

A farmer’s daughter from Assam’s Nagaon district, Das was a 100 m and 200 m sprinter earlier. Seen in that light, her performance graph in the 400 m this year is breathtaking. From 53.21 seconds (in her debut race in March), she has brought down her personal best to 51.13 seconds in just four months.

“While you all were sleeping, I rocked the world.” That’s what the sensational Hima Das told her father after winning the gold. Her father Ranjit Das said, *“I told her that we were all awake to watch her run on television, and she cried.”*

Hima is not just a world-class athlete who swept past the stiff competition with amazing ease. She is also a socially-conscious 18-year-old who took the lead in demolishing country liquor vends in her village Dhing and its neighbouring areas. *“The girl has the guts to do anything. She is never scared to speak out against anything illegal. She is a role model for us and for India,”* a neighbour said.

Hima’s golden run at Tampere is the latest chapter in the incredible story of a feisty girl who dreamed of playing football for India before shifting to athletics just two years ago.

While the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) was proud of the young athlete, a tweet from their official Twitter account *“Not so fluent in English but she gave her best there too,”* left many netizens seeing red. *(Inputs from the Internet)*



Haryana



Andhra Pradesh



Tamilnadu



Assam



Bihar



Maharashtra

**AIFAWH
Demands Day
10th July 2018**



Kerala

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