

The Voice of the Working Woman



**JAIL BHARO
AIKS - CITU**

9 August 2018



National Convention of Workers

28 September 2018 , Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi

The Central Trade Unions in their meeting on 21st July 2018 had taken serious note of the continuous and more aggressive steps by the NDA government against the labour rights, pushing various codes disregarding views points/suggestions of CTUs, having brought fixed term appointment as a policy etc. In this back ground it was decided to intensify our ongoing agitation unitedly. The joint meeting decided to hold a joint **National Convention of Workers on 28 September 2018 at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi** to chalk out a programme of action and the time schedule for joint conventions at state and lower levels wherever possible, sectoral national conventions and any other forms of action leading to two days country wide general strike by the end of the year.

The Convention will commence at 10.30 am on 28 September.

INTUC AITUC HMS CITU AIUTUC TUCC SEWA AICCTU LPF UTUC

FRDI Bill Withdrawn

People's Anger Forced Government to Step Back

On August 7 2018, the government officially withdrew its proposed Financial Resolution and Deposit insurance Bill (2017). This Bill aimed to redefine the regulatory framework by introducing a Resolution Corporation (RC) that would have powers to merge, sell, liquidate any financial institution based on its assessment of their health. This would have effectively undermined the powers of RBI and other regulators. Further clauses like the "Bail-in" would have turned deposits of the people into equity of a loss-making bank. The Bill was introduced in the Parliament on 11th August, 2017 and was currently under the consideration of the Joint Committee of the Parliament.

The Bill had to face strong opposition from all sections of the society – common people, academics, civil society organisations, bank unions and individuals. Opposition to the pernicious FRDI Bill was one of the issues on which the bank employees and officers observed a countrywide bank strike on 22nd August, 2017 at the call of United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU). The Joint platform of central trade unions and employees federations had also taken up a campaign against the bill.

The decision of the Central Cabinet to withdraw the Bill is the reflection of the pressure that mounted on the government by the powerful public opinion that could be generated by the democratic forces of the country in which the bank employees' united movement played a proactive role. This is only a small step towards strengthening public sector banks. We need to develop much wider and more militant struggles to change these anti people neoliberal policies.

*The Voice
of the
Working Woman*

Monthly Journal of the AICWW(CITU)

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On Independence Day

More than seven decades after gaining Independence from British colonialism, the aspirations and the vision of our forefathers who fought for independence remain unfulfilled.

Lakhs of workers, peasants, tribals etc who fought against economic exploitation and feudal oppression also fought colonial rule which was reinforcing such exploitation and oppression. They sacrificed everything they had including their lives because they visualised an Independent India free of inequalities, unemployment and oppression of any kind; where all citizens will have equal opportunities irrespective of their caste, creed, religion or gender.

But the path of development that the ruling classes chose for the country after independence did not lead to the full realisation of the aspirations of our forefathers who sacrificed everything – their youth, their jobs, their earnings and even their lives in the freedom struggle.

With the advent of neoliberal policies the situation of the workers, peasants and other sections of toiling people has started deteriorating. Despite the tall promises made before the Parliament elections in 2014, the BJP government led by Modi, committed as it is to neoliberalism, has failed to implement any of them. Inequalities have further widened during this period. India's human development indices have been sliding. The hard won rights of workers are being attacked to improve the 'Ease of Doing Business' for the big corporates and businesses, domestic and foreign. The '*Sab ka Saath, Sab ka Vikas*' of the BJP before coming to power, has become '*Corporate ke Saath, Janta ko Laa*', after it came to power.

The BJP government is, on the one hand, trying to mislead the people with false promises and false claims, as is evident with the Prime Minister's speech on Independence Day. On the other, it is trying to divert the attention of the people from their real issues to non issues like beef eating, love jihad etc. It is trying to disrupt the unity of the people on the basis of religion, caste etc and weaken their struggles against the neoliberal policies.

It is time for the all sections of toiling people again to come together and resume the fight for realising the vision of our forefathers who fought against the British. Today, we have the resources to realise the dream of wiping out illiteracy, ill health, poverty etc in the country. What is required is the political will to change the trajectory. This requires the reversal of neoliberal policies, and united struggles for alternative pro people, pro worker policies.

It is heartening that thousands of workers and progressive sections of society, across the country, have joined together in the '**Samuhik Jagran**' on the night of 14th August to take the pledge to reignite the struggle for realising the vision of the common people who fought for our independence.

The '**Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally**' on 5th September, with lakhs of workers and peasants from all over the country converging at the national capital will echo this determination of the common people to defeat the anti worker, anti peasant, anti national policies of the BJP government and for alternative pro people policies.

Kisan Mazdoor 'Jail Bharo' Significant in Many Ways

Hemalata

For the first time in decades, the two major sections of toiling masses that create the wealth of our country, workers and peasants, have joined in militant actions against the government policies. The call to court arrest, given by the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) was supported by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, which called upon the workers to actively participate in the programme. Thus, lakhs of peasants and workers participated in the demonstrations, processions, dharnas etc held in more than half of the total districts in the country. In several states, the programme was held in different places in some districts and tens of thousands of them were arrested. In many places, police did not have the necessary machinery to arrest all of those who offered to be arrested. Over 46 percent of the total participants were workers.

The huge and militant participation of peasants and workers in West Bengal and Tripura braving the intimidation, threats and physical attacks by the ruling parties in their states, the TMC and BJP respectively, inspired the people all over the country. The police in these states used tear gas, water cannons, lathi charge etc against the participants. In West Bengal, some of those arrested were not released even by the evening of the second day. The heroic participation of peasants and workers in the jail bhara in these two states created confidence among people across the country that by continuing and further strengthening such struggles, the Left in these states would be able to regain the lost ground and again emerge as the leading force, which in turn will boost the countrywide struggle against the neoliberal regime.

Participation of women workers in large numbers in many parts of the country, in support of the peasants' demands was another significant feature. In several districts, they not just participated but took the initiative in organising the demonstrations and led the court arrest programme.

Though district wise details of the participation of different sections of workers in the programme are awaited, even in states like Gujarat where the CITU is weak, in three districts, where no other CITU affiliated union existed nor the kisan sabha, it was the anganwadi employees and ASHAs under the banners of their unions, who held demonstrations and courted arrest. In Punjab, anganwadi employees led the demonstrations and courted arrest in many districts.

There was visible enthusiasm among the workers which was reflected in the huge participation in the August 9 court arrest programme and its spread in over half of the districts in the country. This indicates the potential to further expand and strengthen joint campaigns and struggles of the workers and peasants leading to the establishment of worker-peasant alliance. Such an alliance alone can decisively defeat the neoliberal onslaught on the working people of our country. The need to develop wider joint struggles, not only of the workers, but also of workers and peasants, to launch offensive struggles against neoliberal policies aimed at their reversal, was being emphasised by CITU since many years. Extending support and solidarity to the demands and struggles of the peasantry and other sections of exploited and oppressed sections of people was seen as a measure towards developing the political consciousness of workers. Efforts were made to develop joint campaigns during the last three years. CITU, AIKS and All India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU) have been giving joint calls to observe January 19 together on certain common demands. The August 9 court arrest programme has taken such joint actions to a higher level and opened up opportunities to expand and consolidate joint struggles.

The success of the jail bhara programme reflects the growing discontent and anger of the toiling people against the impact of the neoliberal policies being aggressively pursued by the BJP led Modi regime. What needs to be done at this juncture is to channelise this discontent and anger into higher forms of struggles against the neoliberal regime.

Peasants and workers have to be made conscious about the link between their day-to-day issues and the neoliberal policies being pursued by the ruling classes and about alternative policies. Unless their class consciousness is raised, the ruling classes would try to mislead them and divert their attention from their real day-to-day problems to non issues like beef eating, cow protection, love jihad etc. As elections approach, the RSS and its outfits including the BJP will desperately use all tricks in their hands and all resources at their disposal to divert the discourse among the people from the failure of their policies towards communal and divisive issues. They will use all methods to disrupt unity of the people and polarise society on communal and caste lines. The fight on the day-to-day and livelihood issues of peasants and workers, against the neoliberal regime has to be combined with the fight against the divisive and disruptive agenda of the communal and casteist forces of all hues and colours, particularly the RSS, which yields greater and wider influence with the BJP in power at the centre and in many states. All efforts have to be made to protect peoples' unity.

CITU made efforts during this period to create awareness among the workers about how the ruling classes, in our country as well as globally, try to promote right wing forces to disrupt the unity of the people and weaken their struggles against the neoliberal policies. It has also tried to create awareness among the working class about the conditions of the peasantry and how the poor and marginal peasants and agricultural workers suffered due to the neoliberal policies being pursued by successive governments since the last more than 25 years. The campaign material prepared by CITU centre included 'talking points' on minimum support price, agricultural workers and migration due to rural distress, aimed at educating union activists. However, some more material related to agrarian crisis and rural distress could not be prepared as envisaged.

The decision to combine the exercise to revamp the organisation with the initiatives for the campaign culminating in the mobilisation for September 5 rally, taken by the CITU general council that met in Kozhikode in March, has proved to be effective. The CITU general council has decided to organise state level workshops in all states followed by district and state union level workshops and meetings of the lowest level committees of all CITU affiliated unions to discuss both. These were aimed to improve the democratic functioning of the organisation, to put into practice the decision to 'reach the unreached' and 'link up issues with policies and expose the politics behind the policies'. State level workshops were held in all states except in Jammu and Kashmir because of the prevailing serious situation. It had to be deferred in Kerala due to some unavoidable reasons and will now be held in the second part of September. In some states district level and state union level workshops have also been completed. The importance of August 9 jail bhara programme was explained in all these workshops. Thus, the organisational preparations and initiatives at the lower levels have also resulted in the large participation of the workers.

CITU's experience shows that sustained efforts to activate members at all levels of the organisation by improving democratic functioning, and to raise their political consciousness to enable largest sections of toiling people understand the need to defeat the neoliberal policies are essential for realising the potential that exists today to defeat the neoliberal regime. There cannot be any shortcuts to defeating the anti-worker, anti-peasant, anti-people and anti-national regime governing the country today.

Indian Workers on Starvation Wage

By all accepted standards, the official minimum wages in states are just enough to keep the worker alive. What they actually get is even less.

Subodh Varma



Minimum wages of industrial workers in India are less than half of what a justifiable calculation – based on minimum calorific intake and the barest minimum of other expenses – suggests. While the central government, using a well-accepted standard formula, provides Rs.18,000 per month to its lowest rung unskilled worker, their counterparts in private

industry are officially supposed to get anything between Rs.6000 to Rs.10,000 monthly. Out of 21 major states with significant industrial employment, 17 states officially fix minimum wages at less than half of the central government's lowest wage. Labour is a concurrent subject in India and hence state governments have the right to fix wages.

This is of course, only part of the story. In reality, most workers do not even get the prescribed minimum wages. They are given anything between 50% to 75% of the statutory levels. Since the enforcement machinery – labour departments with their inspectors and courts – has been hollowed out over the years, there is no enforcement and flagrant violation.

HOW MUCH WAGE DOES A WORKER NEED?

Way back in 1948, British nutritionist Wallace R. Aycroyd defined the food requirement for an Indian worker doing moderate activity as a minimum of 2700 kCal per day, including 65 g of protein and 45-60 g of fat. Nine years later, at the 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC), this was accepted as the basis for calculating the minimum wage needed to sustain a worker and his family. The ILC laid down that retail prices of a mix of various food types (pulses, cereal, vegetables, oil/fat etc.) should be collected to arrive at quantities and costs of food for a worker. In addition, 18 yards of cloth (with washing costs), 7.5% of the cost so reached for housing rent and 20% for fuel, lighting etc. should be added.

Since the worker will also have to sustain his family, it was posited that a standard family would be the worker, his wife and two pre-adolescent children. This would be seen as equivalent of three units (worker – 1 unit; wife – 0.8 unit; and two children – 0.6 units each).

So, the cost of food, clothing etc. is multiplied by 3 to get what was named 'minimum wage'. All this calculation is succinctly explained in the 7th Pay Commission Report (pp 60).

One obvious omission from this calculation was that education, recreation and such other spending of the hapless worker's family were totally ignored. It took another 33 years before the Supreme Court, in a landmark judgement delivered in 1991 in *Reptakos Brett Vs Workmen*, ordered that

another 25% of the total should be added to cover these omitted costs. Henceforth this became the basis of minimum wage fixation.

In 2016, the Seventh Pay Commission (a statutory body set up every four years to revise salaries of the central govt. employees) brought out its report. It went through the exercise of recalculating the lowest salary applicable for the bottom rung of government employees. The rest of the salary structure is built up from this base. And the formula it used was the one described above - the 15th ILC recommendations and the apex court's judgement in *Reptakos Brett*.

What was the outcome? It recommended that Rs. 18,000 is the bare minimum that should be paid to the lowest rung of employees, unskilled workers. Actually, the sum was working out to more than that but the Commission adjusted for already fixed allowances for education etc. and fixed it at Rs. 18,000.

Note that there are still glaring loopholes in this calculation, persisting from the 15th ILC itself. For instance, no account is taken of aged parents of the worker, who will be staying with the young family. Also, the counting of women as 0.8 unit is unjust and discriminatory. But still that's the standard.

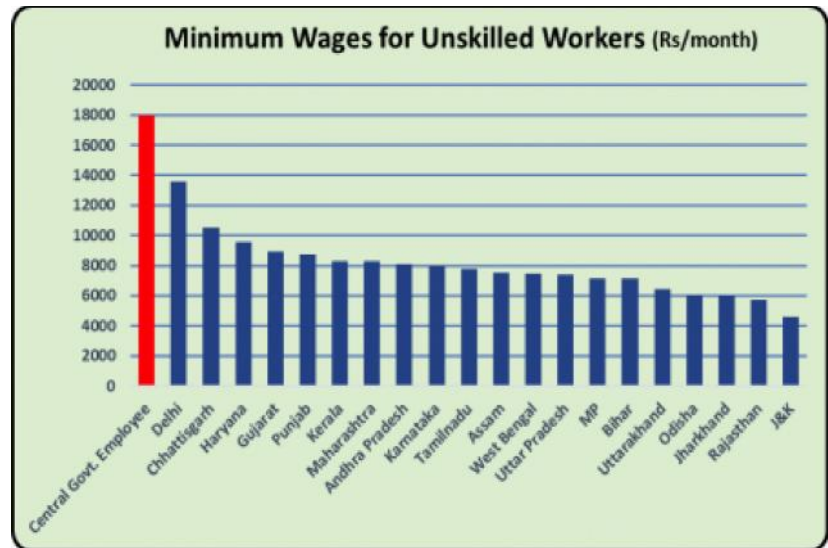
HOW DO WORKERS COPE?

It is difficult to imagine the lived reality of lives of industrial workers who are surviving on wages as low as Rs. 6000 or

7000 in modern 21st century India. For one, most workers try to work 'overtime' – extra hours – provided their employer needs more work. The average worker may be working as many as 10-12 hours per day. Legally, the extra hours should fetch the worker double the hourly wage. But nobody pays that much. It is 'single' overtime rate, that is pro rata. But the cash starved worker bargains away his life, his health, his well-being, working those extra hours. Secondly, the family cuts down on food expenses, foregoing expensive items like meat and eggs and milk and fruits. They save money by living in shanties without drainage or sanitation. They avoid expensive schools and almost never educate children beyond schooling. They take recourse to quacks and indigenous 'cures' to save on medical expenses, unless faced with some catastrophic illness. They become indebted. And so, they somehow manage to live.

Over the years, workers have been demanding higher wages. But under neo-liberal regimes, like the one in India, there is no sympathy for the workers' welfare. In fact, real wages have stagnated or declined, as inflation robs the workers. Mounting joblessness keeps wages depressed as insecurity over jobs rules the hearts of all those employed.

Yet, the fight for better conditions is gathering momentum. There have been two massive industrial strikes (in 2015 and 2016) and a giant three day sit-in at Delhi last November. Now, trade unions have called for a courting-arrest programme on 9 August followed by a historic rally at Delhi on 5 September this year, jointly with farmers' organisations. The anti-worker Modi government is facing a desperate working class, angry and ready to fight.



Savage Dreams of the Capitalist Class

They want worker wages to be cut to starvation levels, and the Delhi High Court has played into their hands.

Delhi's industrialists had proposed that minimum wages of unskilled workers in the metropolis should be pegged at just Rs.8525 per month, flying in the face of all accepted standards, precedents and the prevailing conditions. This bizarre demand was made by employers' representatives who were members of the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee set up by the Delhi Govt. to recommend a new statutory wage level. These members were Mrs. Alka Kaul (CII), B.P. Pant (FICCI) and G.P. Srivastava (ASSOCHAM), besides representatives from DMRC and PWD. They claimed that they had studied the current prices of essential commodities and costs of other necessities in arriving at this figure.

These facts are revealed in the judgement delivered by the Delhi High Court on 4 August, nullifying the Delhi Govt. notification of March 2017 which had hiked the minimum wage to Rs.13,550 per month for unskilled workers.

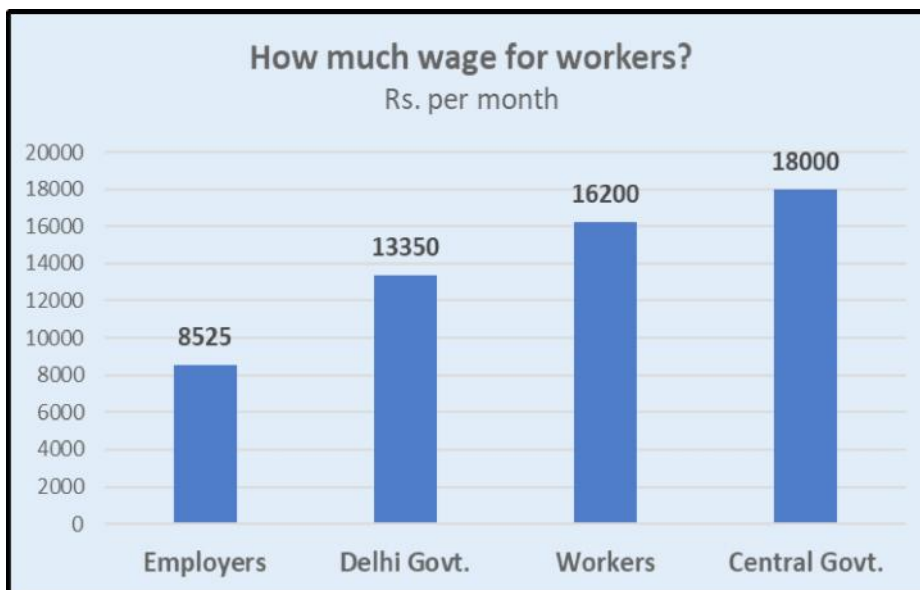
The workers' representatives had proposed Rs.16,200 while the Labour Dept. of the state government had suggested a compromise at Rs.13,550. It may be recalled that the 7th Central Pay Commission (CPC) which fixed salary levels for central government employees had laid down a minimum of Rs.18,000 per month as the lowest possible wage for unskilled work.

But the issue at stake here is not just a legal tangle. Parsing the employers' arguments in court (as summarised in the High Court judgement) and their submissions in the Advisory Committee, one gets a glimpse of the brutal mentality of Delhi industrialists. Considering that they were represented in the Advisory Committee by three top all-India bodies of industrialists, it would be safe to assume that this mentality is shared by most, if not all, industrialists in the country.

Minimum wages are fixed according to a well settled formula laid down in 1957 by the Indian Labour Conference and expanded in 1991 by the Supreme Court. It includes cost of food and other essentials, housing rent, education and medical expenses, etc. In the 1991 judgement, the apex court had said that there can be no compromises and those employers who claim that they

cannot bear the burden of such wages should not run their business at all.

Based on these principles, the detailed calculation done by the CPC using prices prevalent on 1 January 2016, concluded that for a family of two adults and two children, Rs.8020 would be spent every month



on food items which are: wheat/rice, dal (pulses), vegetables including greens, fruits, milk, sugar, edible oil, milk, eggs and meat.

So, what the employers want is that their workers – in industrial units or in shops, offices and other establishments – should be paid only so much that they and their family survive. The employers do not want to pay anything for clothing, or for education, or for medical expenses, or even for



transport and lighting. Of course, they don't want anything to do with housing costs. And recreation is out of the question.

This savage outlook used to exist in the early days of capitalism – say, in 18th Century England, described with searing accuracy by Charles Dickens. It was also practiced worldwide by slave-owners and colonial masters. Seen in the context of the fact that most workers are forced to work more than 8 hours in order to survive, and that they live in horrendous conditions without access to basic human necessities, their condition is no better than those of slaves of yore.

It would be remiss if the helping hands of courts, government administrations and the whole panoply of ideological justification provided by the mainstream media and other apologists of the system are not held culpable for this state of affairs. They too have contributed to the impunity of India's 21st century industrialists and other employers in demanding that the workers need to be given just enough wages to enable them to breathe and survive.

(Subodh Verma: News Click)

CITU Condoles the Demise of Shri Somnath Chatterjee

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions expresses profound grief at the demise of former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Shri Somnath Chatterjee, at Kolkata after a prolonged ailment. He was 89.

He had been a veteran parliamentarian having been elected to the Lok Sabha ten times and played an important role in taking up the issue of the working people and their rights and livelihood and also in defending democracy, secularism and federalism.

As a renowned lawyer by profession, he had taken up many cases in defence of the rights of the workers and employees against victimization by employers and the governments. His frontline role along with others in the judicial battle against mass scale victimization and dismissal of railway workers following their nationwide strike in 1974 will always be remembered.

CITU conveys its heartfelt condolence to his family members and friends.

Militant Protest in AP against Privatisation of Mid-day Meal Scheme



A large number of women mid-day meal workers from the Andhra Pradesh Midday Meal Workers Union (CITU) tried to lay siege to Andhra Pradesh state HRD minister Ganta Srinivasa Rao's house at Visakhapatnam on July 30, opposing the government decision to introduce a cluster system all over the state and to run the mid-day meal scheme through private agencies. The police did not allow them to enter the street where the house is located, but the workers stormed through the barricades, leading to arrests. There was pushing and jostling with the protesters trying to reach

the gate of the minister's house. Male police beat up the women protesters and dragged them to police vans. Many women were wounded in the lathi charge, scuffle and also in the dragging. Police targeted the leaders and they ruthlessly dragged K Swarupa Rani, CPI(M) state committee member and general secretary of the union. Around 3,000 workers from all over the district participated in the protest. The women workers then came onto the national highway and staged a 'rasta roko' there, leading to a traffic jam for some time. Those arrested included Mid-Day Meal Scheme Workers' Union state president and secretary G Varalakshmi and K Swarupa Rani respectively, district president K Prasanna, honorary president S Aruna, CITU district leaders G Koteswara Rao and RKS V Kumar.

The union is opposing the cluster system in which it is proposed that nine mandals of the district be given to a private agency. The schools within 20 km are part of one cluster. The union contended that since the food is prepared early at one place and distributed at noon, it lacks nutritional value. It alleged that the food distributed at Mangalagiri, Tulluru, Tadepalli, Gajuwaka and Rajamahendravaram was of poor quality. They were demanding, among other things, payment of minimum wages instead of the monthly Rs 1000 to each worker, increase in menu charges, basic facilities to prepare food, LPG on subsidy and monthly payment of bills and wages.

Dharnas and rallies were conducted all over the state in which thousands of women workers participated.

ASHA Workers Coordination Committee meets in New Delhi

A meeting of the AICCAW(CITU) was held at BTR Bhawan, New Delhi on 23 July 2018. Nineteen comrades from 9 states – Assam, Kerala, Haryana, Maharashtra, AP, MP, Odisha, Jammu and the Centre attended the meeting.

Since January 2018 there have been big, militant and protracted struggles of ASHA, USHA workers and facilitators in Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab. The big participation in these struggles, way beyond our membership, reflects the anger of the workers about their working conditions and non fulfillment of their demands. The demands for fixed monthly payment and increase in incentives have been won in Haryana after an extended struggle over 7 months. In Andhra Pradesh the demands have been conceded by the government but have yet to be notified.

Participation in the 5th September Worker Peasant Sangharsh Rally in Delhi, the Jail Bharo on 9 August and Samuhik Jagran on 14 August, was discussed and it was decided that at least 10,000 ASHAs, USHA workers and facilitators will participate in the 5th September Sangharsh Rally.

The meeting discussed organisational issues and the proposal for formation of an all India federation.

AIFAWH Organisational Review

As per the decision of the CITU Genral Council decision, the Organisational Review of AIFAWH conference decisions was held on 20-22 July 2018 at EMS Academy, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

70 members from Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, Telengana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal attended.

The Review was held in six sessions: membership, democratic functioning, planning and prioritisation, cadre development, financial planning and transparency and organizing other sectors.

The review was based on the targets fixed in the 8th Conference of AIFAWH held in January 2016 and the organizational workshop held in 2017. After thorough discussions and planning, quota for membership 2018 was fixed as 6.2 lakhs. It was decided to prepare a project wise list of membership with the total number of workers, to be sent to the all India Centre before August 2018.

It was decided to Increase the number of functioning project committees and district committees to make it double the number before the next conference.

The other decisions taken are

- State level organizational workshops to be held in all states where they were not held, within two months.
- Complete the quota for Fund @Rs.10 per member to AIFAWH as early as possible
- Bank accounts to be opened by all unions at all levels. Accounts of all state committees to be audited within three months and all district committees within six months. Report of the audit committees with the accounts to be sent to the all India Centre before November 2018.
- Prepare a list of 25 cadres per district to be sent to the all India centre before 15 August 2018. Plan for education and training of the cadres.
- At least one state level class for three days, district level class for two days and project level class for one day to be held within one year in all states
- Continue the publishing of leaflets on different issues – four leaflets for the Campaign on 5th September Rally. Number of leaflets printed shall not be less than the membership.
- Campaign among the peasants, agricultural workers and MNREGA workers- plan for meetings of these sections in villages with the help of CITU, AIAWU and AIKS.

An extended meeting of the Working Committee was held on 22 July 2018 which endorsed the recommendations of the organizational review meeting.

In the last session, detailed planning was made for the campaign and mobilization on 5th September 2018, Mazdoor-Kisan Sangharsh Rally. During the preparations, in many states the booking and preparations exceeded the quota.

On the action programmes it is decided

- Maximum participation in the jail bhara programme of AIKS on 9 August 2018 as per the CITU decision
- On 14 August 'Samoochik Jagaran' on 'Freedom from Hunger, Malnutrition, Illiteracy and Ill health' mobilisation at local level along with CITU
- Signature collection to Save ICDS on memorandum to the Prime Minister @200 per member to be completed and to reach the centre before 5th September 2018
- All state committees should meet to make a detailed plan for the follow up for signature collection, campaign, mobilization and travel for 5th September 2018 rally.

ASHA State Conference in Madhya Pradesh

“It is the responsibility of the government to pay minimum wages to ASHAs ... the state government must do justice to ASHAs by implementing minimum wages for them” – Surekha. Under the banner of the ASHA-USHA- Sahyogini Union (CITU), the ASHA workers Madhya Pradesh state conference was held on 5 August at Bhopal. The conference was attended by 268 delegates from 19 districts. The presidium comprised of Mamta Rathore, Krishna Thakur, Pooja Kanojia, Sarita Bairagi, Sadhana Golaiath, Madhavi Singh, Rani Sahu, Madhuri Solanki and Kiran Dehria. Kamlesh Sharma conducted the proceedings.

Addressing the Conference, Surekha, member of the All India Coordination Committee of ASHA Workers and General Secretary of the Haryana ASHA Workers Union, Haryana, said that the state government is depriving ASHA, USHA, workers and Sahoginis of a minimum wage, which is their right. She alleged that the central and state governments are exploiting ASHA, USHA workers by paying them only incentives. She called upon the workers to oppose this with all their

might and narrated how the movement and struggle of ASHA workers in Haryana have resulted in their getting a fixed monthly payment from the government. They will now intensify their struggle until they get regularisation as health workers and a minimum wage of Rs 18000 per month. She said that in Madhya Pradesh the Shivraj Patil government is discriminating against ASHA, USHA workers and they have no alternative but an intensified fight based on a strong, widespread unity of the



workers.

The Conference was inaugurated by Pramod Pradhan, the CITU State General Secretary, who congratulated the workers for the struggles and agitations they have been conducting continuously, which will leave the state government with no option but to concede their demands. AT Padmanabhan, the state President of the ASHA, USHA workers union, placed the report of the organization, activities and the future tasks. The treasurer placed the accounts. 12 delegates participated in the discussion on these., after which both were passed unanimously.

The conference elected a 51 member state committee with AT Padmanabhan as President, Kavita Solanki as Working President, Mamta Rathore as General Secretary, Pooja Rathore as Assistant General Secretary and Annapurna Sen as Treasurer.

The conference passed some important resolutions and called upon the ASHA, USHA workers and sahyoginis to participate in large numbers in the **Jail Bharo** on 9 August, the **Samuhik Jagran** on 14 August, and the **Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally** on 5 September.

The State CITU President, Ram Vilas Goswami, in his concluding speech, praised the ASHA workers and assured them that the CITU will continue to support them fully in their demands and struggles.



Andhra Pradesh



Himachal Pradesh



Chhattisgarh

Uttar Pradesh



Haryana



Assam



Madhya Pradesh

Maharashtra



Rajasthan



Andhra Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh



Punjab

Uttar Pradesh



NRC: Include All Indians

The publication of the draft National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam has caused widespread consternation as over 40 lakh persons who had applied have not found a place in it.

The updating of the NRC of 1951 constitutes part of the implementation of the Assam Accord of 1985. As per this Accord, March 24, 1971 was fixed as the cut-off date for determining those who came after that date to be illegal migrants.

The decision of the Supreme Court in 2014 to get the updating of the NRC underway was generally welcomed by all sections of the people in Assam; by the *Asamiya* and indigenous communities who feared being overwhelmed by the illegal migration and by religious and linguistic minorities of East Bengal origin who wanted an end to their harassment and insecure status.

The final draft NRC released on July 31 shows that out of 32,991,384 applicants, 28,983,677 have been included in the Register. This has left out 4,007,707 persons. This amounts to nearly 12 percent of the population of Assam.

The enumeration process in the NRC has many flaws and errors. Among those excluded are persons whose other family members have been included. In a case of twins, one has been included while the other was not so lucky. There are cases where the husband is included while the wife is excluded from the list.

The process has been discriminatory to women in general. The panchayat certificate is one of the documents listed for establishing linkages with parents and grandparents who resided in the state before 1971. The High Court had struck down the validity of panchayat certificate, but the Supreme Court had ruled that panchayat certificates are valid provided that they are verified.

At the time of the first draft list published on December 31, 2017, it was estimated that 27 lakh married women had submitted panchayat certificates as legacy documents. Most of these were Muslim women. Such women had no birth certificates or school certificates as they were illiterate. They also had no marriage certificates. The only document they could get was the panchayat certificate to provide proof of their parental linkage.

The draft NRC shows that in most of these cases, the panchayat certificate has not been treated as valid. It is essential that when claims and objections are filed, the panchayat certificate is treated as a valid linkage document. It is also reported that a large number of applicants who submitted ration cards as supporting documents were rejected.

The publication of the draft NRC has led to political jockeying. The BJP is aggressively seeking to portray all those excluded as Bangladeshi infiltrators, or, illegal migrants. They seek to make a distinction between Hindu refugees and illegal Muslim migrants. The Citizenship Amendment Bill, which seeks to provide citizenship for non-Muslim migrants, must be seen in this context.

On the other end of the spectrum, Mamata Banerjee has denounced the NRC process and raised fears of Bengalis and Biharis being driven out of Assam. This is an obvious ploy to rouse Bengali sentiments and play upon minority insecurities for narrow political purposes.

As against the communal divisiveness, there has to be a bias-free process of including all Indians as citizens in the NRC. The NRC updating is not taking place in a political vacuum. There is a BJP-led government in the state which seeks to target all Bengali-speaking Muslims as illegal migrants. Vigilance has to be exercised so that this bias does not manifest in the enumeration process. The Supreme Court bench which is overseeing the process has to be sufficiently aware of this ground reality.

The Supreme Court has directed that a standard operating procedure be prepared for considering claims and objections of those excluded. There must be clear and transparent guidelines, on the basis of which the documents and supporting evidences are to be accepted. The period for making claims, which is up to September 28, must be extended, so that no one is deprived of their right to be heard. It is imperative that no Indian is deprived of his or her right to citizenship and is to be included in the NRC.

Enact Comprehensive Legislation for Agricultural Workers

Agricultural workers play an important role in agricultural production, of food as well as commercial crops. They make up the largest share of all working people in our country. According to the last Census in 2011 there were 14.43 crore agricultural workers in India. This is about one third of our country's workforce and 55 percent of the rural workforce. With the continuing agrarian crisis, large numbers of small and marginal farmers are compelled to abandon cultivation and join the ranks of agricultural workers. Thus, their number has been rising steadily every year. Between 2001 and 2011, it has increased by 3.69 crore.

Agricultural workers are mostly landless labourers. But they also include very small or marginal farmers who cannot sustain themselves from their tiny land holding and are forced to work on other people's land. They work for wages, but often their entire wage is not paid in money.

The number of workdays in agriculture in a year has gradually been coming down. It is reported that at present they get less than 30 days of work in a year. Since the BJP led Modi government came to power at the centre, the number of days of work under the MGNREGS has also come down. As a result, agricultural workers are compelled to migrate to the towns and cities in search of work. They join the lakhs of workers in the urban informal sector, who have no job security, no income security or social security. About half of the agricultural workers are dalits and adivasis. Agricultural workers, who play an important role in agricultural production, comprise a large section of the poor in our country, facing hunger, intense drudgery, social oppression and deprivation. Their wages are very low. Women agricultural workers usually get much lower wages than men.

Women, who comprise the majority of agricultural workers, do not have maternity benefits. The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana of the Modi government provides Rs 6000 as 'partial compensation of wages', but only for the first child. Considering that the Maternity Benefit Act, which is not applicable for agricultural workers, provides for paid maternity of 26 weeks, this 'partial compensation' comes to a pittance of less than Rs 33 a day. This too comes with lot of conditions which many women agricultural workers cannot comply with and hence are denied even this. As a result, women have to work up to late stages of pregnancy and resume work within days of delivering the child. They have no crèche facilities. The young children are left in the care of the old in the family or their elder siblings. No wonder it is the women and children belonging to the agricultural worker families who comprise the majority of the malnourished in the country.

The trade unions and the organisations of agricultural workers have been demanding a comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers. During the long consultation period before the enactment of the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, CITU has been consistently demanding a separate comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers covering their wages, working conditions and social security benefits. But, more than seventy years after independence, the government has failed to enact such an Act. The minimum wages declared for agricultural work remain on paper as there is no enforcement machinery.

One of the most important demands of the agricultural workers is for land. Land reforms and redistribution of land are a major measure that will not only provide a source of income and

security for the agricultural workers; it will increase the purchasing capacity of a vast section of people in the country, create demand and in turn boost industrialisation and employment. But the governments, serving the interests of the landlords, have not been interested in implementing land reforms. It is estimated that 5.19 crore acres of land is technically surplus, as per the limited land ceiling laws today. But out of this only 67 lakh acres have officially been declared surplus by the governments and out of this 61 lakh acres have actually been taken over and 51 lakh acres distributed to the landless families. Even out of this, the major portion has been distributed by the Left led state governments in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura.



The governments at the centre have been more interested in protecting the interests of the landlords than in improving the conditions of the agricultural workers and other poor sections of society. Their attitude is clearly reflected not only in the non implementation of land reforms but in their apathy in enacting a comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers and in not ensuring minimum wages and other benefits to them.

Despite the claims of successive governments at the centre of implementing various schemes and programmes for improving the conditions of the poor in the country – related to housing, food security, pension and social security etc, the fact remains that the allocations for these have been too meagre. The insistence of the present BJP government on linking all the benefits with Aadhaar has proved to be disastrous for a large number of agricultural worker families.

Since the advent of the neoliberal regime in our country, the governments at the centre and in many non-Left states have been consistently reducing the expenditure on welfare measures for the poor. Budgetary allocations of many central government schemes including the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, National Health Mission (NHM), the Midday Meal Programme, etc have been cut down drastically. It is the women and children from agricultural workers' families who suffer the most because of this.

The **Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally** on September 5, 2018 is to fight against such inhuman exploitation of the agricultural workers and the apathetic attitude of the governments committed to neoliberalism that enable the few big corporates and landlords to amass wealth at the cost of the toiling people.

It is to demand land reforms and redistribution of land, comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers and social security for agricultural workers. These are not the demands of the agricultural workers alone. These are the basic measures that will enable sustained development of the country and its people. Reversal of the anti people neoliberal policies is a prerequisite for this.

Unite! Fight!

**Against the governments that work for the 0.1%
For policies that benefit the 99.9%**

Three Girls Die of Starvation in Delhi

Three sisters were found dead on July 24 at a house they had temporarily moved into three days ago. According to the postmortem, the three had died of malnutrition/starvation and its complications. A second postmortem report has confirmed death due to starvation and that there was no trace of fat on their bodies. "And when the body was opened, stomach, bladder and rectum were all found empty," Medical Superintendent of LBS Hospital, said adding they did not suspect any foul play like poisoning as there was "no food in the stomach".

The death of the three sisters in the national capital due to starvation is a testimony to the failure of systems and schemes which were meant to address a case like theirs: from the school to the neighbourhoods to the government food scheme.

The oldest of the three, eight-year-old Mansi, was in Class III at the Poorvi Dilli Nagar Nigam Balika Vidyalaya in Mandawali, where she was entitled to a meal every school day under the midday meal programme. But in July she had attended school just twice — on the 10th of the month and the day before her death. (Courtesy – The Indian Express and Outlook)

Hooliganism in the Name of God

In recent times the Kanwar Yatra has started turning into a menace for people in north India. With hooliganism in the name of god, you can see a kind of social disorder and violence on the roads, never witnessed earlier.

One such incident was when around a dozen saffron-clad kanwar pilgrims wrecked a car with rods and sticks and overturned it on a busy street in West Delhi's Moti Nagar, as passersby looked on helplessly. The video capturing the violence showed two policemen nonchalantly standing nearby as the vandals went about wrecking the car.

In another incident, a group of kanwariyas beat up a cyclist after his cycle grazed past one of them in Chawan village. The kanwariyas allegedly attacked the victim with canes and sticks, leaving him critically injured. In a small UP town kanwariyas smashed a car, on a busy road.

Ironically, an additional DGP of UP was seen in a video, showering rose petals on Kanwariyas, from a helicopter. (Input from the internet)

The Reign of Terror

70 Muslim families of Khelum village in Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh have left the village over the last week fearing police atrocities during the annual Kanwar Yatra that is underway. During the yatra last year, clashes between Muslims and Kanwariyas who passed through a Muslim-dominated neighbourhood in Khelum village left dozens from both communities and 15 security personnel injured.

The police has issued 'Red Cards' to at least 250 residents of Khelum village as a warning against trouble making. 441 members of both communities, who were asked to sign a symbolic bond of Rs 5 lakh each which they will have to pay in case there is any disturbance of peace.

The Kanwar Yatra will go through the same route this year. While Hindus in the village, who are confident of a peaceful yatra, are not worried, the red cards, the frequent searches at homes and Rs 5 lakh bonds are an indication of trouble for most Muslims in Khelum.

(Courtesy – The Indian Express)

Shelter Homes or Torture Chambers?

Muzzafarpur, Bihar

A social audit report of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, has revealed the gory details of the abuse and exploitation in a shelter home for girls run by an NGO at Muzzafarpur, Bihar. Medical reports of the victims, aged between 7 years and 14 years, confirmed the rape of at least 35 out of 44 minor girls from the shelter home. The case details indicate that this took place in connivance with the district administration officials and monitoring agencies.

The Home was run by an NGO of Brajesh Thakur, a politically well connected man. He has been arrested for the rape and torture of more than 30 girls at the shelter home but has been getting special treatment in prison. Seizure of a list of names and mobile numbers of 40 people, including a minister, indicates he is still pulling strings. Evidently he made calls either from the jail superintendent's office or someone's mobile phone.

The shelter homes run by Thakur were state funded. His newspaper, *Pratah Kamal*, a Hindi daily, published only about 300 copies a day, but inflated its circulation figures to 60,682 copies and so managed to get advertisements worth Rs 40 lakh annually from the government. *"While Pratah Kamal was Thakur's passport to fame and earned him proximity to politicians, bureaucrats and influential people in the mainstream media, his real business was the NGO, which landed projects from successive governments. The Social Welfare Department gave grants to his NGO — the five Muzaffarpur shelters alone got about Rs 1 crore every year. He ran a sex racket and supplied girls to officials to get tenders"*.

The Bihar Chief Minister did not comment on the expose for several days after the news became public. The state social welfare minister, Manju Verma, was finally forced to quit after pressure mounted on the government over reports that her husband had close links with Brajesh Thakur. The girls of the shelter Home have identified Dilip Kumar Verma, the Chairperson of the District Child Welfare Committee, who is one of the accused in the case, referring to him as the "head sir".

The TISS has conducted similar audits in 110 such shelter homes across 35 districts of Bihar and found sexual, mental and physical abuse rampant in 15 of these shelter and short stay homes :-

- ◆ Some underage girls were found to be pregnant, some staying with babies.
- ◆ Girls accompanied by male friends were picked up from eateries and sent to the shelter homes 'for protection' where they were raped and molested by male staff of the shelter home.
- ◆ Girls were sent to various places at night for 'casual sex' by powerful people.
- ◆ Boys in some shelter homes report abuse and physical torture. They were locked up in rooms after dinner with no access to toilets.
- ◆ The 15 accused institutions include some Government run shelter homes.

Deoria, Uttar Pradesh

After the Muzaffarpur shelter home horror in Bihar, another such case has been unearthed in a Women and Girls' shelter home in Deoria, Uttar Pradesh.

Twenty-four girls were rescued from a shelter home in Deoria after allegations of sexual exploitation of the inmates came to light. The shelter home, which is called Ma Vindhya wasini Mahila Prakishan Evam Samaj Sewa Sansthan, has 42 inmates. Eighteen inmates are still missing.

The details of activities at the shelter home emerged when a 10-year-old girl managed to flee. She reached a woman police station and informed them about the plight of the inmates. *"Many times white, black and red cars used to come around 4 pm every day and take away some girls, along with the manager. When they returned in the morning, they used to cry,"* the girl alleged.

(Inputs from the Internet)

Palestinian Teenager Ahed Tamimi Released from Prison

Oliver Holmes



Ahed Tamimi, a 17-year-old Palestinian who was filmed slapping and kicking two Israeli soldiers outside her home, has been released from jail after serving an eight-month sentence.

On Sunday morning (29 July), she arrived back to her home village alongside her mother, Nariman, who was also imprisoned and had livestreamed the incident on 15 December on Facebook.

Under a deal accepted by the Israeli military court, Ahed had pleaded guilty to four charges, including assault, incitement

and two counts of obstructing soldiers. The trial was held behind closed doors.

Supporters say Ahed Tamimi's case exemplifies the brutality resulting from 50 years of occupation. The event took place shortly after she heard that Israeli troops had severely wounded her 15-year-old cousin, whom they shot in the head with a rubber bullet during a stone-throwing clash. Her case has also focused attention on the arrest and detention of young Palestinians by Israel. Local human rights groups say more than 300 minors are currently being held.

Saleh Higazi, head of Amnesty International's Jerusalem office, said Ahed had served an *"unjust sentence based on the ridiculous premise that she posed a threat to armed and heavily protected soldiers. This is a huge relief for Ahed Tamimi's loved ones, but their joy will be tempered by the injustice of her imprisonment and the grim knowledge that many more Palestinian children still languish in Israeli jails, many despite not having committed any recognisable crime."*

In Nabi Saleh, a village known for years of anti-occupation protests that often into stone throwing and the deployment of teargas, Palestinian flags had been set up on the roof of the Tamimi family home. The mother and daughter were greeted with cheers as they entered.

"The resistance continues until the occupation is removed," Ahed said. *"All the female prisoners are steadfast. I salute everyone who supported me and my case."*

Ahed visited the grave of former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, where she laid a wreath, kissed the headstone twice and recited a prayer from the Qur'an. She was then taken with her family to a meeting with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, at his headquarters in Ramallah.

Her father, Bassem, said other prisons had helped his daughter complete her high school exams in jail, and she had received scholarship offers for universities abroad.

Israel captured and occupied the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem in the 1967 war with Jordan, Egypt and Syria. It disengaged from Gaza in 2005, but through military rule it maintains control over most of the West Bank, where the Palestinians have limited autonomy.

Tamimi Mural

In a related incident, Israeli authorities on Saturday arrested two Italians and a Palestinian for painting Tamimi's now-familiar image on the Israeli security wall in the West Bank.

(Courtesy : The Guardian. The Associated Press contributed to this report)

From Sweeping a Dhaba Floor to Playing for Gold at Asiad

Suresh Sharma TNN

For most of her life, **Kavita Thakur**, a member of the Indian women's kabaddi team, lived in a cramped dhaba at her village Jagatsukh, 6 km from Manali, Himachal Pradesh.

The 24-year-old, who helped India win gold at the 2014 Asiad, spent her childhood and teen years washing utensils and sweeping floors at the dhaba, which is run by her parents. Father Prithvi Singh and mother Krishna Devi still sell tea and snacks at the dhaba, while elder sister Kalpana gives them a helping hand. *"Even I used to work with my parents at the dhaba. I washed utensils, swept floors and did several other chores,"* said Kavita.



"My childhood and teenage years were very difficult. In winter, we slept in the back of our shop on the floor. It was unbearable since the floor felt like ice. Back then we didn't have money to buy mattresses. There were days when we didn't make any money and we all went hungry," she adds.

'Took up kabaddi as it was not costly'

The gold medal at the 2014 Asiad shot her into the limelight and the state government also pitched in with some financial assistance. Kavita and her family — parents, elder sister and younger brother Ashok Singh — have now moved to a rented accommodation near Manali town. *"It was the happiest moment of my life when I could give my parents a proper house to live in,"* says Kavita. *"My younger brother can now get good education."*

"It is Kavita's hard work and determination that has given us a roof over our heads. Some years ago, we couldn't even think of living anywhere else other than our dhaba. We wish she brings more laurels for the country," says mother Krishna Devi.

Kavita started playing kabaddi at her school in 2007. *"I took up kabaddi because it wasn't a costly sport,"* she says. *"In fact, my elder sister was a better kabaddi player than me, but she had to give up her dream of playing the sport at the highest level in order to help my parents at the dhaba."* After putting in some consistent performances at the national level, Kavita joined the Sports Authority of India in Dharamshala in 2009. *"At SAI, I concentrated on my game and gave my best. Soon, I was selected in the national team. My sister and parents always supported me. They wanted me to follow my passion. I would have never played for the Indian team without their unflinching support."* *"Subsequently, government support came in and that helped me to concentrate on my game and not worry about where the next meal was coming from,"* she adds.

In 2011, Kavita had to take a break from the sport for six months after she was diagnosed with a digestive system ailment. *"There was a massive breakdown in my digestive system. I was hospitalised for quite some time, and I was worried that I would never be able to return and play the sport again,"* Kavita remembers.

But she made a roaring comeback the next year, helping India win gold at the 2012 Asian Kabaddi Championship. Kavita is a defender in the nine-member women's team that will represent India at the 2018 Asiad. *"In the last Asian Games, when we won the gold medal, I was an all-rounder. But, two years ago, our national coach told me to focus on one aspect of the game. And then I became a full-time defender,"* says the 24-year-old.

CITU CONGRATULATES ROAD TRANSPORT WORKERS FOR MAGNIFICENT STRIKE

Against the Draconian Motor Vehicle Amendment Bill

More than three crore road transport workers in state-transport, private passenger transport, goods transport and small passenger transport like auto, taxi etc have staged a magnificent strike action throughout the country to voice their protest against and also determination to resist the draconian Motor Vehicle Amendment Bill which is still pending for enactment by Parliament.

The draconian Bill presented by the Modi Government is a design for paving the way for destruction of state-owned public transport corporations, wherever these are there. This will expedite the process of complete privatization of the public transport system and take-over of them by big private corporates leading to monopolization and enhancement of the public transport fares to the detriment of the interest of the common working people. This Bill will also lead to mass-scale victimization of the road transport workers engaged in both public transport and goods transport including the small transport operators. The strike is also against the frequent rise in diesel and petrol prices making public transport costlier for the people at large. There are other issues also. The All India Coordination Committee of Road Transport Workers Organisations, comprising all road transport workers' unions affiliated to CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, AIUTUC, AICCTU, LPF, UTUC and TUCC had jointly called for the strike action on 7th August 2018.

The strike was total in Kerala, Bihar, Odisha, Pondicherry, Assam and J&K. In Haryana, state transports were virtually off the road and private transport also joined the strike in a big way. The Bihar Petrol Pump workers also went on strike. In Assam there was total strike in private sector. In West Bengal more than 80% workers went on strike in rural area. In Tamil Nadu the strike was total in Private Sector and 60% of STU workers went on strike. In M.P., there was total strike in 30 districts and partial in other districts. In Uttarakhand the STU buses were off the road. In Meghalaya there was strike except in flood affected area. In Telangana the strike was total in STU and 75% workers in Private Sector participated in the strike. In A.P, the Auto, Taxi and Lorry workers participated in 13 districts for strike.

There was partial strike in Tripura, Punjab, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. In Sikar and Jaipur the auto-workers went on strike. In Jharkhand there was strike in 8 districts. In Delhi about 25% autos went on strike. In Chattisgarh there was strike in 5 districts.

CITU congratulates the road transport workers and their trade unions for their massive countrywide



united strike action against the retrograde Motor Vehicle Amendment Bill that is notoriously designed to destroy the state run public transport services and ensure monopolization of the public transport by the corporate sector, much to the detriment of peoples' interests.

CITU demands that the Modi government must take a call from this magnificent strike action and withdraw the draconian Bill thewart.

Demanding Government notification on enhanced Minimum Wages CITU CONGRATULATES TEA-GARDEN WORKERS OF WEST BENGAL FOR MASSIVE STRIKE ACTION

Around 4 lakh tea garden workers spread over in the tea plantations in the districts of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Alipurduar and Dinajpur in West Bengal have started strike for three days from 7th August 2018 onwards, demanding, inter alia, announcement by the state government for the enhanced minimum wages for the tea-garden workers which is long overdue as committed by the TMC government in the state before the united forum of all the tea workers trade unions, irrespective of affiliations. The strike will continue till 9th August 2018. Thereafter the united forum of tea garden workers will meet to decide further course of offensive struggle.



The united forum of tea workers trade unions have been agitating on their demands since last couple of years through various programmes including strike action. The TMC government in the state was compelled to respond through holding meeting with the united forum of trade unions and giving a commitment to finalise the enhanced minimum wage for the tea workers as being demanded by the unions, at the earliest. But even after passage of more than a year, no action has been taken by the government which compelled the united forum of tea workers trade unions to decide for three days strike action.

Till the afternoon of 7th August 2018, the strike was near total. Not only that, the striking workers from various tea gardens started marching towards Uttarkanya Building at Siliguri, the headquarter of the state government in North Bengal. On their way wherever police force have stopped them, the striking workers in thousands started road blockade demonstrations paralyzing all vehicular movement.

The entire north Bengal covering four districts today has been witnessing numerous road-blockade demonstrations by the striking tea workers determined to carry on their struggles braving atrocities by the Trinamool Congress government in the state.

The strike has been so massive on its first day itself that even the workers having allegiance to TMC trade union also joined the strike en masse, while their leaders are moving with the state administration. In such a situation, the state government has again invited the leadership of the striking workers for holding talks through the Dy Labour Commissioner.

Tea garden workers and all their unions of all affiliations are totally united and determined to fight to the last to achieve their demands from the unwilling hands of the TMC government in the state which is acting in favour of the tea garden owners.

The strike will continue till 9th August. CITU congratulates the heroic struggle of the tea garden workers in West Bengal and the magnificent unity of workers developed through struggle and calls upon workers and their unions in other sectors to extend support and solidarity to their ongoing struggle.

Floods in Kerala

The flood situation in Kerala is worsening with every passing day, owing to unprecedented continuous rains, rivers flooding and huge rise in the water level. In the worst floods faced by Kerala in a century, as we go to press, the death toll is 324 and many more are missing. Shutters of 35 out of 39 dams have been opened. All rivers (33) overflowing.

More than 2 lakh people are in 1500 relief camps. Road, rail and air travel has stopped in many places. Landslides were reported in 215 places. More than 60,000 houses were fully destroyed and several thousands severely damaged. 2000 kilometers of PWD roads have also been damaged.

The floods have caused devastation in both agriculture and plantations. A red alert has been declared in 12 of the 14 districts. Several places are isolated by floods and water sources have been contaminated. With rains still continuing and damage and devastation increasing every day, the assessment of the total damage is yet to be made, but initial estimates indicate that it will run into over 10,000 crores.

The Left front government is organizing all out preventive and relief activities in coordination with the political parties, class, mass and social organisations and local governments. The armed forces and disaster relief agencies are working around the clock to rescue marooned people and provide relief. The CMO dubbed the floods as worst in the last 100 years with three other security agencies involved in the rescue effort. The massive humanitarian crisis was compounded by the shortage of drinking water as many water treatment plants got submerged under the flood waters. The Navy has dispatched a tanker from Mumbai to Kochi with 8 lakh litres of drinking water.

The Union home minister had visited the state and declared Rs.100 crores which the Prime Minister has raised to Rs 500 crores, after his visit to the state and aerial survey of the affected areas but it is far too little compared to the losses and rehabilitation requirements.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions calls upon the working class in the country to stand in solidarity with the people of Kerala, one of the strongest centres of the working class and democratic movement. The people of Kerala have always unfailingly remained in the frontline in extending solidarity and support to people suffering from similar calamities and devastation in other parts of the country on all previous occasions.

All possible support and help must be extended to the flood victims.

The Kerala State Committee of CITU is fully involved in rescue and relief operations.

We urge our readers and all others to send their contributions to the CITU Kerala State Committee as soon as possible.

The details of the bank account of Kerala state committee of CITU are as follows:

CITU KERALA STATE COMMITTEE

Account number – 57037147257

SBI CITY BRANCH

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

IFSC – SBIN0070028

Kerala Flood Facts



Worst flood in the century

35 dams (out of 39)- shutters opened - All rivers (33) overflowing

Death toll - 324 (as on 18 August 2018,)

Many missing in landslides and floods

2.2 lakhs in relief camps

Kochi airport shut. Kochi metro shut. Trains stopped

Huge landslides in many districts – Idukki, Wayanad, Kottayam, Palakkad

Roads- around 10,000 kilometers of PWD roads damaged, many bridges swept away

Sea coast under heavy winds and rain –

Crops – paddy and others totally washed away

In Alleppy the entire farming area is under water

No work for fishermen, plantation workers, agricultural workers

Red alert in the state (12 out of 14 districts)

More than 20,000 houses have been fully destroyed (till 12 August, more later)

Several places were isolated by floods and water sources contaminated.

Landslips occurred at 215 locations across the state

Damage caused is to the tune of Rs.10,000 crore (primary estimate till 18th), rain still continuing

Kerala- area 38,863 km² - Population- 34 million

Densely populated with 860 persons per sq km (India – 382/km²)

(Reports until 18th August)

Those who take...

Those who take the meat from the table
Teach contentment.
Those for whom the contribution is destined
Demand sacrifice.
Those who eat their fill speak to the hungry
Of wonderful times to come.
Those who lead the country into the abyss
Call ruling too difficult
For ordinary men.

Bertolt Brecht