



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## Rajmahal Coal Mine Disaster



**Disaster Site of the Open Cast Mine**



**Excavating the Dead**

(Report page 4)



**Protest at Rajmahal  
against Coal Mine Disaster**

---

**CITU Scheme Workers Unions'  
Joint Rally at Ahmedabad**

*(Report Page 24)*



**Strike & Victory of  
Delhi Municipal  
Contract Workers**

*(Report Page 24)*

---

**Steel Workers  
National Convention  
at Bhilai**

*(Report Page 11)*



---

---

## WORKING CLASS

FEBRUARY 2017

### EDITORIAL BOARD

**Editor**

**K. Hemalata**

**Working Editor**

**J.S. Majumdar**

**Members**

**Tapan Sen**

**A.K. Padmanabhan**

**Amitava Guha**

---

**Inside**

**Page**

**Rajmahal Coal  
Mine Disaster**

**- R P Singh**

**4**

**Protest against  
Demonetisation**

**12**

**Workers - Peasants -  
Agricultural workers**

**18**

**Scheme Workers Strike**

**21**

**States**

**24**

**Consumer Price Index**

**26**

---

---

## Editorial

# Not an Accident, It was a Murder Trap

It was neither accident nor just failure on the part of the several authorities having responsibilities. It was mass murder of the workers on 29 December, 2016 at Rajmahal open cast coal mine. This unsafe open cast coal mine was a known murder trap.

For this mass murder of the workers, union coal and power minister Piyush Goyal is responsible on two counts – for pressurizing CIL to fulfill the coal production target and being directly responsible as the union coal minister under whose administrative control CIL functions. ECL management is responsible, being the principal employer, for giving over drive to achieve coal production target ignoring all safety norms. DGMS is responsible for giving permission to reopen the mine, without proper inspection of safety norms, which was closed for two months for safety reasons. The outsourced company is directly responsible on several counts as CITU's investigating report shows. Yet, none has been made responsible for this mass murder of the workers. None has been arrested so far. Even the NDRF for rescue operation did not have any mines expert in the team. Compensation against loss of life is not enough. The culprits must be punished.

As last reported, 18 workers' dead bodies were excavated and reportedly at least 45 to 50 workers are still buried under the huge pile of overburden. Since the management of the outsourced company did not keep any employment and attendance records under Section 48 of The Mines Act, 1952 and relevant provisions of The Mines Rules, 1955; it is not known as to how many workers were actually working at the time this incident took place. As most of the deceased workers were migrant workers, it became more difficult to establish the facts

on number of workers buried alive.

CITU has already inter alia raised demand with the union coal minister (i) to file criminal case against the outsourced company Mahalaxmi Infra Ltd for this mass murder of the workers; and (ii) to institute enquiry by an independent agency on the conducts of ECL official and DGMS officials for their own negligence and abetting criminality by the operating private contractor and to fix responsibility and to award exemplary punishment to the culprits.

As we all know, the union minister will do nothing as demanded. It is necessary to force these demands by the trade union movement for immediate arrest of the culprit outsourced company owner and management who are directly responsible for this mass murder of the workers and for independent / judicial enquiry on the incident and role of ECL and DGMS in it.

# Rajmahal Coal Mine Disaster

**R. P. Singh**

Vice President, All India Coal Worker's Federation

In Lalmatia area of Godda district in Jharkhand a major accident took place on 29 December, 2016 in the second shift of working at the Maintola coal patch of the Rajmahal open cast mines of the Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL) under the administrative control and responsibility of coal ministry under union coal and power minister Piyush Goyal.

A team comprising of R. P. Singh of All India Coal Worker's Federation (AICWF); Vivek Choudhury (general secretary), Gauranga Chatterjee and Sujit Bhattacharya of CMSI, the CITU union in ECL; and CITU Jharkhand state general secretary Prakash Viplav visited the accident site on 31 December, enquired about the cause and consequences of the accident.

The mining operation was outsourced to a Gujarat-based private company Mahaluxmi Infra Limited. Under coal ministry's pressure ECL management's restlessness to achieve its production target and outsourced company's main aim to maximize profit at any cost are the two main background reasons of the accident.

Mining operation of this patch of Rajmahal mines were closed due to unsafe mining conditions for last 2 months. Suddenly, the mining operation resumed on December 26, just 3 days before the accident. It is reported that DGMS (Director General of Mines Safety) gave permission to reopen the mines.

On 27 December, in the very first shift, the workers noticed cracks in the overburden and immediately reported the same to the management. The management of the outsourced company neither took any action nor suspended operation. Again on next day, on 28 December, workers noticed cracks widened further and immediately reported the same to the management. Again the management ignored all safety precaution with criminal negligence and continued the operation non-stop. This time workers started protesting. Yet, the management of this private company threatened and coerced the workers to work in dangerous conditions. As was apprehended, eventually, overburden collapsed in the second shift of working on December 29, 2016 at 07.30 PM burying alive the workers working under the cracked overburden in all the three benches.

CITU team, after investigation and gathering facts, came to the following conclusion.

## **The Conclusions**

1. This Patch of Rajmahal Coal Project is called Maintola Deep mines or Mahalaxmi Patch as it was outsourced to Mahaluxmi Infra Limited, a Gujarat-based company owned by Bidla family.
2. Before this accident the mine remained closed for about 2 months due to unsafe mining condition. Mining work was against started on 26 December, 2016 after permission of DGMS. When the mine remained closed declaring it unsafe for mining, how DGMS granted permission to reopen it for production?
3. The overburden was about 700 to 800 feet high, 1 kilometer long and 500 meter wide. The dumped overburden was adjacent to working bench of the mine ignoring all provisions of approved mine plan and violating all rules for mines safety. How the provision of maintaining distance of 60 metres between overburden and working face of mines was not being maintained which is gross violation of mines safety rules/approved mine plan?
4. In first shift on 27 December workers noticed cracks in the overburden and reported the same to the management. But no action was taken by the management. On 28 December in the second shift workers observed that the cracks became wider. The same was reported to the management by the workers. Workers even protested and refused to work. But ignoring all warnings, management forced them to continue to work.
5. Accident took place on 29 December, 2016 in second shift at about 07.30 PM. Huge quantity of overburden started sliding down and fell on workers working below in three benches. This is the biggest mine accident in the world in a open cast mines.

6. At the time of accident minimum 35 to 40 dumpers were in operation with their operator and helper in each machine. One Shovel was also working at that moment. It means that minimum 70 to 80 workers were working at the time of accident. Some workers said that number of operating dumpers were about 70 at the time of accident.
7. However, no legal records related to attendance, number of workers employed and deployment of workers at the time of accident was available. As none of the victim was local resident, the management was taking advantage of this.
8. Rescue operation is insufficient. Few NDRF persons and only 4 Excavators are deployed to remove huge quantity of debris. As per our estimate more than 1 year time would take to remove debris with present speed of rescue operation. We also concluded that immediate deployment of 300 feet Dragline can remove the debris within 1 or 2 months to recover workers' death bodies
9. Outsourcing of the mining operation to a private company is one of the main reason of this accident because their concern is to produce maximum quantity of coal ignoring all safety rules to maximize their profit.
10. In our opinion not only had all the basic mining safety rules like maintaining distance of 60 meters between *overburden* and *working face* of mines was not being maintained, the post accident handling by the management was also been extremely weak.
11. The issue of criminal negligence on the part of DGMS, Mahaluxmi Infra Limited and management of Eastern Coalfields Limited remain.

## **An Unprecedented Disaster**

*[Extracts from the report of CITU leaders and AICWF assistant general secretaries G.K. Srivastav and Manas Mukherjee to CIL on 7 January, 2016]*

We the undersigned members of Safety Board and Standing Committee on Safety visited Rajmahal Mines on 04.01.2017 where on 29.12.2016 a disaster took place and have taken away many precious lives of contractor workers. We met several contractor workers, departmental workers and management of Rajmahal OC and had interaction with them. We visited the nearby places of accident up to the extent it was accessible and allowable. With all such inspections and interactions we made some prima facie observations.

The accident record of Rajmahal OCP is very alarming. On 29 September 2001, 7 workers died due to collapse of haul road (case No. 93/2001, Lalmatia P.S). 2 years before, 3 workers died due to in rush of inundated water in working place. 6 months before, 3 workers were injured due to puncture of water sump in deep mine site. There are no regular meetings of Safety Committees. Area Safety Department as well as Project Safety Department are practically defunct.

Rajmahal OCP was encircled in almost U-shape by overburden. At the working site the OB dump was above 150 m in height without having any bench.

On 27 December a slide of dump was noticed in the morning shift and repetition occurred on 28 December during night shift also. On 29 December, worker were not willing to work on coal/OB bench due to threat to their lives. In 2<sup>nd</sup> shift they were threatened by the Manager, Rajmahal OCP and he forced them to work. Between 7-8 PM the stability of dump failed and about 650m width 110m height (out of total height) of the OB dump collapsed and slide down to working place resulting in burial of about 23 workers (exact number is not known as D form was not available). Before 20 minutes of this disaster there was a radio message in control room about abnormal widening of crack in dump, which also gone un-heeded by the management.

It is a fact beyond any doubt that stability of OB dump failed due to its abnormal height made without proper benching, abnormal weight and knowingly disturbing the coal seam and its immediate strata lying in pressure zone of toe of dump.

The statement made by the management denying any cutting of coal or its overlying strata is not convincing but its opinion of sheering of solid strata below the OB dump due to presence of unknown fault line or criss-cross fault cannot be ignored, and it may be examined. Though still the question remains that knowing well about the presence of fault and also undetected fault lines, why the OB dump was made to an

abnormal height and why the strata/coal below the toe of dump was disturbed, why the OB was dumped over the quarry edge instead of the place of dumping specified/identified in work order.

The above statement of management was disputed by the workers both contractual and departmental. According to them, there was no benching in overburden and the height of overburden reached above 150 meters. The dump was made in fault zone of about 60 meter down throw fault.

There was tremendous pressure of OB dump in base ground i.e. at the toe of the dump. The pressure was so high that a crack was formed vertical and the width of the crack was used to be measured by contractor and management on the top of the OB. It was found that this crack was widening rapidly but this symptom of severe instability of OB dump was ignored both by contractor and management. Though the workers were unwilling to work below the overburden both in OB and coal face, but they were forced to work in most unsafe mining condition even with threat of their lives.

A reputed citizen and social worker of Mahagama drew the attention of DGMS through a letter by e.mail and endorsing copy to Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, GOI and others, over the violation of safety rules in Rajmahal OCP. In his complaint with other issues the contravention of mining laws in respect of deep mining side (existing site of accident) was also raised on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2015. But surprisingly DMS(S) Dhanbad after a so-called inspection denied the observations and complaints of that citizen and declared that there was no truth in his complaint.

A number of accidents due to failure of OB dump had occurred in past in CIL and also in ECL but such a big company has no infrastructure and manning trained in disaster management of such type of occurrences. It is why that there was an inordinate delay of sixteen hours in rescue operation and till date only eighteen bodies are recovered.

It was ascertained by the workers that there was no system of attendance in 'D' form. According to them, earlier attendance was used to be marked in a sheet of paper during their working in work place. It affirms that no attendance used to be made before commencement of their duty.

The attendance sheet of 29.12.2016 is not available. Our union demanded the copy of attendance register/details of attendance and OT on 29.12.2016, 2<sup>nd</sup> shift in writing on 31.12.2016 but till date it was not made available to the union.

When the management was approached for the attendance records/register of the workmen, management replied that their attendance sheet along with other document related with the attendance had been confiscated by the DGMS authority and management has no such document in its possession. But management stated that 31 workman were present in "B" shift of 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 2016. Out of which 8 workman are safe and alive and 23 workmen met with the fatalities out of which 18 bodies had so far been recovered. But local people stated that according to their information more than 40 workmen were present in that particular shift.

Rajmahal OCP and its surrounding villages are waiting for another disaster, as the working of this OCP has endangered the Bhorai, Basdiha, Lohandia, as it has reached to the edge of the village. One of the villages namely Janakpur have been evacuated and resettled in paper only but we have observed that habitation still exists very close to the mine.

The workers of Mahalaxmi Infra Pvt. Limited are compelled to stay in the camp inside the mines for 24 hours which recalls the memory of CRO camp existed in pre-nationalized era. That camp is located on the top of the overburden which may collapse any time. The workmen are not allowed to come outside the camp and debarred to mingle with the local people.

Another outsourcing agent MRCL of Aditya Birla Group has established a fuel station near the haul way having 4 large diesel tanks. Local people reported that underneath the fuel station there is vast underground fire which was tried to be doused by dumping of overburden. They apprehend that fire hazards may cause accident at any time and would affect the adjoining villages.

The role of DGMS is reprehensible, it did not give cognizance to the complaints on the violation of safety laws in this mine. It allowed continuing the mining operation and extraction of coal in a very dangerous condition.

---

## File Criminal Case; Hold Independent Enquiry

[Extracts from the letter of CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen to the Union Coal Minister Piyush Goyal; 4 January, 2017]

Further to my letter to you dated 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2017 on the tragic mine accident that occurred on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2016 in the Rajmahal area of Eastern Coalfields Ltd, I am placing below the details that have been gathered by on the spot visit and enquiry by a team of All India Coal Workers Federation (CITU) on 31-12-2016.

1. The mining patch in the Rajmahal Project where the accident occurred on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2016 is called Maintala Dip Mine or Mhalaxmi Patch as the mining work was outsourced to Mahalaxmi Infra Ltd, a Gujarat based company.
2. Mine was closed for last two months due to unsafe mining condition.
3. Surprisingly enough, the mining work in this patch was resumed on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2016 reportedly with the permission granted by Director General of Mines Safety (DGMS), although there was no change of situation in the concerned mine nor the Contractor took any step in making the mining safe by way of removing over-burden and related measures.
4. In the 1<sup>st</sup> shift of 27<sup>th</sup> December 2016, workers noticed crack in the overburden accumulated surrounding the face of mining bench and immediately reported to the management. But no action was taken. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> shift of 28<sup>th</sup> December 2016, the crack in the overburden became wider. Workers reported to management and expressed their opposition to work in such a condition. The Private contractor compelled them to start work by giving dismissal-threat.
5. As reported by other workers, prior to accident, the height of the huge overburden was around 700 to 800 feet at different places surrounding three sides of the working face of the mine, about 1 kilometer long and more than 500 meter wide. The overburdens were dangerously close to the working face, much below the 60 meter distance in utter violation of the basic safety norm. It is not understood as to how DGMS granted permission to start operation or the permission is managed by the contractor by usual manipulative practice!
6. Accident took place on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2016 in 2<sup>nd</sup> shift at about 07.30 pm in the evening as huge quantity of overburden slid and fell down on workers working below in three benches.
7. At the time of accident at least 35 to 40 dumpers were reportedly in operation with their operator and helper in each machine. One Shovel was also operational at that moment. It means minimum 70 to 80 workers were working at the time of accident. Some workers said that number of operating dumpers were about 70 at the time of accident.
8. The manner, rescue operation is going on with only 4 excavators, it will take at least a year to remove the debris, recover all the bodies and ascertain actual death toll; there is every possibility of abandoning it midway; it appears the concerned authority has no concern on precious lives of the workers who were on duty on that fateful moment. I feel, 300 feet draglines must be deployed to remove the entire debris and recover all the bodies instead of present excavators.

It is clear, the unholy nexus between the private contractor and the concerned management of ECL and DGMS in the said outsourced mines manned mostly and deliberately by non-local migrant workers and the desperate bid by the contractor to maximize profit by maximizing production in that open-cast mine has led to forcible resumption of operation in the mine, closed for safety reason, causing such tragic accident. Repeated warnings by the workers on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> December 2016 about the crack developing in the overburden were ignored by the contractor. This is criminal offence by the contractor in connivance with the concerned authority including office of DGMS.

In view of above, I request and repeat precisely what I have already conveyed to you in my letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2017, that:

- The contract of M/s Mahalaxmi Infra Ltd must be cancelled and the concerned mining area should be brought under departmental operation by ECL
- Criminal case should be filed against Mahalaxmi Infra Ltd for causing death of so many workers by way of deliberate violation of basic-mine safety norm
- Enquiry by an independent agency is conducted on the roll of the concerned ECL officials and the DGMS officials in directly or indirectly abetting the Private Contractor in its criminal negligence in the mining operation to fix the responsibility of this disaster and to bring the abettors to with exemplary punishment for the criminal negligence as well as violation of standard and safe work practices.
- Adequate compensation Rs.12.5 lacs) as recommended by the court of enquiry constituted for Anjani hills mines disaster to the family of all the victims including those shown missing is ensured
- Employment to one dependent of the victims in permanent roll of ECL is given.

## **After Jharkhand toll, 2016 one of deadliest years for mine workers**

Thursday night's mine collapse at Eastern Coalfields Ltd's Lal Matia coal mine in Jharkhand, rounds up one of the deadliest years for those toiling deep in the bowels of the earth. The 17 mine worker deaths reported till January 1 sharply push up the mining fatality count for this year, which stood at 65 across both coal and non-coal mines during just the first six months of this year, for which latest data is available — translating into a fatality every three days. More than a dozen workers remain trapped.

In a sector whose safety record is far from inspiring, at least 122 people more were documented to have met with a serious accident during this period, which translates into a serious accident every one and a half days. With a fatal accident every three days, mining is arguably the most dangerous profession in India, alongside ship-breaking.

The numbers for July-December 2016, which would include the Lal Matia mining accident, could well push the fatalities this year to a record high.

Major accidents this year include one in the early hours of May 28 at the Turamdih Uranium Mine near Jamshedpur, run by the State-owned Uranium Corporation of India Ltd (UCIL), killing three miners after they accidentally got buried under the wet radioactive slurry they were reportedly clearing at a depth of over 250 metres. The Turamdih mine is located 6 km from Jamshedpur in Jharkhand.

Earlier, on April 14, three workers of Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL) were crushed to death when a portion of the roof of a structure inside the coal mine collapsed on them when they came in to drink water around mid-day. Of the four workers at the Shanthikhani main site near Mandamarri, Telangana, one escaped with minor injuries.

Eastern Coalfields, where the latest accident has taken place, is a subsidiary of State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL), the world's largest coal miner.

Industry insiders, including senior CIL officers, concede that official number of fatalities could be much lower than the actual deaths taking place deep inside mines.

There are two other serious issues. One, that though employees of State-owned coal firms are governed by the same set of rules as, say, those of Air India, payout rates in case of accidents are low. The compensation for injuries or death ranges between Rs 5.4 lakh and Rs 8.5 lakh, rarely crosses Rs 10 lakh, and is under process for long. The other is that a number of those who perish are contract workers who, or their immediate families, have practically no safety net apart from this payout.

Records also show that a majority of mining accidents in India involve roof and side wall collapses of a mine. The Ministry of Mines has termed the Lal Matia accident an "unprecedented" event. "*Prima facie, it is observed that the incidence is unprecedented, since an area of 300 m length by 110 m wide solid floor of the Over Burden dump area has slid down by about 35 m involving around 9.5 million cubic metres of earth material. This could be due to failure of the bench edge along the hidden fault line/slip,*" the ministry said in a December 30 statement.

Witnesses on the ground have confirmed that there were warning signals in terms of a cascade fall of boulders at least three hours before the cave-in at the open-cast project in Jharkhand's district Godda.

---

While official statistics show that average fatality rates and the number of serious accidents have been coming down — the Directorate General of Mines Safety figures suggest annual fatality rate is 0.21 in India (taking into account the total number of mines), down from 0.36 about five years ago — that is cold comfort for policymakers considering that an average seven lives were lost in 2015 for extracting 100 million tonnes of coal. Considering last fiscal's coal production target of 700 million tonnes, that works out to nearly 50 for 12 months.

An uptick in the economy, experts fear, could invariably lead to increased pressure on Indian mining utilities to ramp up output, prompting calls for re-evaluating the safety of mine workers.

India produces 89 minerals operating 569 coal mines, 67 oil & gas mines, 1,770 non-coal mines, and several more small mines, running into over a lakh. About one million people on an average are employed on a daily basis at these mines, with the sector contributing about 5 per cent to the country's GDP.

Between 2009 and 2013, there were 752 documented fatalities in mining operations in India, according to the Office of Directorate General of Mines Safety, Ministry of Labour and Employment. These included accidents at mines run by CIL, Neyveli Lignite Corporation and Singareni Collieries.

One of the reasons why the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act was enacted in 1973, taking over private sector mines, was the poor safety record of mines. Lack of investment in coal mines is cited as one of the main reasons for the high casualties. Accidents during surface transport by heavy machinery in open-cast mines, apart from the use of explosives, are the other key reasons.

*(From: The INDIAN EXPRESS; 3 January, 2017)*

## **Live Burial of 50 Workers in Illegal Mining by Coal Mafias**

3 MLAs of West Bengal Assembly - Runa Dutta, Sujit Chakravorty and Ajit Roy – in a joint letter to the SP of Bankura dated 14 January, 2017 demanded enquiry and action on the reported live burial of 50 workers and recovery of only 4 dead bodies caused due to subsidence on 12 January at noon time during underground illegal coal mining by coal mafias in the Kalidaspur project under Satgram Area of ECL in Mejia of Bankura district of West Bengal.

## **CITU 15<sup>th</sup> Conference Resolution On Safety in Workplace and Occupational Health**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of CITU being held on 26-30 November 2016 at Puri, Odisha expresses grave concern on alarming increase in incidences of accidents in workplaces throughout the country leading to death of workers and also permanent as well as temporary disablement due to injuries. Continuous neglect by both Govt. and employers in the area of occupational health hazards are also affecting lakhs of workers' life and livelihood.

World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) has observed, "There are 6300 deaths due to accidents in each day in the world. In every year, 2000 Lakh workers face death and permanent disability due to work related accidents and occupational diseases. Even ILO expressed serious concern about this menace throughout the world. They estimated that 4% of GDP is being lost due to accidents which comes to around 1.4 Trillion dollar or Rupees 75 lakh crore in a year in 1995 price."

In our country, the situation is even worse. Loss owing to work-place related accidents is estimated much above the world average, at 6% of the GDP at the minimum or Rs 4.2 lakh crore per year. Thousands of workers are being killed every year in factories, mines, electricity installation, oil refineries, construction, service sector etc and almost double the number are being subjected to severe injuries including loss of limbs; but only a very small portion of such accidents are officially reported. Regular inspection of factories has been virtually abandoned in order to ensure ease of doing business. It is no more mandatory for the factory owners to report on accidents to Inspector of Factories and therefore majority of the accidents go unreported. Neglect of preventive safety and skipping of standard operative procedure for more production,

reckless contractorisation and outsourcing of core production work and the inhuman ploy to get the job done by untrained or apprentices at a cheaper rate are the reasons behind most of the work-place accidents.

The official record published by the Labour Department on industrial accident is a gross underestimate and nowhere near the actual reality. In 2015-16, the fatality in factories owing to accidents has been shown to be only 144 which is far below the actual number of fatality and severe injuries, victims of which are mostly the contract workers. Death due to electrocution in 2013 and 2014 has been reported to be 10218 and 9606 respectively, more than 15% of which are workers, contract workers in particular, in electricity and other industries. Even in Maharashtra alone, 759 workers died in SEDCL due to electrical accident in 2014-15. In public sector steel plants, death of workers due to accidents in last one year period is 30 besides severe injuries almost double the number of death, while in private steel plants, run mostly by contract workers, accident death is more than 200 in a year. And if the death and severe injuries due to fire and explosion in the fire-works factories, chemical factories and accidents in construction sector including the collapse of buildings etc during the span of last one year or so are taken into account, then number of fatality would be at least 10 times more than the official estimate. The mining sector, coal and non-coal together, during the span of last three years reported 340 numbers of fatality due to accident and 1195 cases of severe injuries. Increasing number of road accidents numbering around 4.5 lakh to 5.10 lakh every year causing around 1.8 lakh death and 5.4 lakh injuries.

Violation of safety norms relating to occupational health hazards arising out of materials handling, exposure to impermissible level of sound pollution, pollutant gas, particulates and toxic chemicals etc are also making a heavy toll on the health and longevity of mass of the workers in various industries. The tragic fact is that lung related diseases including TB are not yet recognized as occupational disease. Occupational diseases like occupational asthma, Asbestosis, Silicosis, pneumoconiosis, plural mesothelioma, noise-induced-hearing-loss, tuberculosis etc are affecting large number of workers in the workplaces having serious debilitating impact on their lives to push them towards premature death or disabilities only because appropriate protective and preventive measures along with regular health check as per statutory provisions are being disregarded and violated by the employers' class in their lust for profit. Cases of silicosis in stone crushing and construction work; irreversible effect of mesothelioma from asbestos goes unrecorded. Recent verdict of Supreme Court in 2015 in favour of silicosis patients in the unorganized sector of Madhya Pradesh working in Gujarat is a case to be noted. The apex court directed the Gujarat Govt to pay a compensation of 3 lakh rupees each to 238 deceased workers and the Madhya Pradesh Govt to rehabilitate another 304 ailing patients and it took 10 years of litigation. Thus it is crucially important that trade unions must take up the issues of OSH more seriously. The long term ill effect of working in the hazardous work place is not yet recognised. In fact the illness of the workers in chemicals, cement, ship-breaking, fire-works, plantation etc are required to be seriously studied and appropriate and elaborate statute need to be put in place and enforced to address the preventive safety and problems faced by the victims of diseases.

In the fast emerging sector like IT and ITES, workers also face multiple hazards, like fatigue, carpal tunnel syndrome, radiation affecting eyes, musculoskeletal disorders, etc. Instead of taking them into account for the safety-related statutes, the Govt. is now trying to exclude the IT and ITES sector from its purview while initiating the process for partially ratifying ILO convention No. 155 to satisfy the IT-barons. The Govt. recently formed a tripartite task force for the purpose of updating the policy on Occupational Safety and Health. CITU has also participated in the exercise. The group finalised modifications which is laying with the Govt. since one year. The Govt also made an ill attempt to exclude IT sector employees, office workers and importantly all agricultural workers from OSH measures while trying to ratify ILO Convention No. 155. This was protested by CITU and the Govt. has not yet ratified the Convention.

While amending the Factories Act, it has been told that inspections will be made under the web enabled risk weighted random inspection scheme which makes the very system of inspection ineffective. There is nothing on safety councils in the factories and safety officers will only be appointed if the factory employs 500 or more. A large number of workers will suffer from non-implementation of the basic safety measures in work place.

The issue of safety at workplace and occupational health is yet to find the priority place it deserves, in the agenda of most of the trade unions barring a few exceptions. Everything is at the mercy of the employers, even the compensation and rehabilitation of the accident victims at workplaces and in almost all the cases

victims are denied their dues and cause of accident are hushed up and the same unsafe work-practices continue. The trade union movement must have to take up the issue of safety in workplaces and occupational health much more seriously in view of alarmingly worsening situation throughout the country. Awareness has to be created among the workers and trade union activists for more conscious and organized intervention about the menacing incidents of workplace accidents on the one hand and disastrous impact of occupational diseases. Along with bread and butter issues, the safe-working and occupational health issues are also to be brought in the agenda of collective bargaining in a more aggressive manner. The demand to Government must be for proper legislation having wider coverage and a strong inspection and enforcement machinery to monitor implementation and stringent punishment for violation.

For occupational health hazards, pressure must be built up on the Government for ratification of all safety related Conventions of ILO including Convention no 176 on occupational safety and health. We must demand to widen the list of notifiable occupational diseases, demand banning of use of asbestos and proper rehabilitation of the workers working in the asbestos factories, demand appropriate statutes on prohibitive, protective and preventive measures against dust, heat, toxic chemicals and gas and also against stress and strain prevalent particularly in the IT sector to be stringently followed in all the workplaces along with a strong enforcement machinery. We must also simultaneously demand for adoption of appropriate alternative technology in the production/operational process to minimize the exposure to such hazards, if not fully eliminate. Such an approach would be instrumental in integrating the struggle on workplace safety and occupational health with the larger problem of environmental pollution confronted by the society as a whole.

The Conference calls upon the trade union movement in general and the CITU unions in particular to make the issues relating to safety and occupational health as one of the priority agendas for struggle against the neoliberal policy regime and take initiative to equip themselves appropriately to discharge this crucial responsibility.

## **National Convention of the Steel Workers**

United front of the steel workers unions held a massive national convention at Bhilai in Chhattisgarh to jointly oppose the move of Modi government to privatise three premier steel plants of SAIL at Salem, Bhadrawati and Durgapur.

The convention unanimously adopted a resolution to build joint sustained struggle against this privatisation move of the government. The policy deficiency of the government is mainly responsible for the problems being faced by the steel industry today, the resolution said.

Presiding over the convention, the president of the Hindusthan Steel Employees Union, Bhilai (CITU) said, 70 years before Bhilai Steel Plant was established for the self-reliance journey of the country.

The convention was addressed by the national convener of the unions' united front, P. K. Das. INTUC general secretary read the inaugural speech of INTUC president Dr. Sanjeev Reddy. CITU general secretary Tapan Sen, MP addressed the convention.

Others who addressed the convention include AITUC union's general secretary Adinarayana, MHS leaders Rajendra Singh and its unions general secretary J N Chandrasha, Panner Savam from Salem Steel Plant, T Debraj of INTUC Salem, president of INTUC union Vikas Ghatak, J P Banerjee and Ayodhya Ram of CITU, Ispat Shramik Manch leader Bhav Singh Sonewani and Bijendra Tiwari of AICCTU.

# PROTEST AGAINST DEMONETISATION

## Failed Declarations; Consequences and Sufferings; Real Intent and Bonanza for Corporates

The demonetization of the 1000 and 500 rupee notes announced by the Prime Minister on November 8 has caused immense loss to a large part of our economy plunging crores of people into agony and loss of livelihood. The Prime Minister's appeal for a fifty day time frame after which he assured things will come back to normalcy is over and normalcy is far from being reached. On the contrary, the agonies of people continue to mount. The restrictions on cash withdrawals from the people's own money deposited in banks continue.

None of the four objectives – combating black money; corruption; counterfeit currency and terrorist funding — that the Prime Minister listed as the reason for the demonetization are achievable through this move. More than 90 per cent of the black money, the Prime Minister himself publicly said is parked in tax havens abroad. Not a rupee of this has been touched nor is there any move to pursue the recovery of these monies. With almost all the demonetized currency now returning to the banking system it is clear that whatever black money was held in cash has now been converted into white money and lies deposited in the banks. Final figures for the deposits in the banks are yet to be made public. If it exceeds the value of recalled notes then it means that all the counterfeit currency in circulation has also been legitimised. The seizure of huge quantum of new notes is indicative of the fact that high level corruption exists. Far from eliminating corruption, this move has only created newer and higher forms of corruption.

As far as combating terrorist funding is concerned that this demonetization has not made any dent is obvious from the fact that since the September 30 'surgical strikes' happened, 33 security personnel have lost their lives due to terrorist attacks. The consequent death toll of security personnel in 2016 has been recorded as double the death toll in 2015.

Lives of crores of Indians have been devastated by this demonetization. This is bound to impact upon the economic inequalities in the country. Already in the two years since this BJP government assumed office inequality has sharply risen. In 2014, 1 per cent of India's population, the ultra-rich held assets worth 49 per cent of our GDP. By 2016 as a result of PM Modi's neo-liberal policies this figure went up to 58.4 per cent. With these effects of demonetization the enriching of the rich and the impoverishment of the poor is bound to intensify.

With all the declared objectives not being met, the real objective of this demonetization became clear with the thrust for shifting from a cash economy into a digital economy

The talk of shifting to digital payments is ridiculous because in rural India only 13 per cent, 108 of the 834 million people have access to internet connections. Only 26 per cent of the people have access to smart phones. Given this predominant dependence on cash transactions, the devastation of many of the sectors has been enormous.

Simultaneously, its thrust to move towards digital transactions is a bonanza for profit maximization to international finance capital and corporates. Each digital transaction carries a transaction cost which is an additional burden on the consumer and the source of profit for the corporates. Clearly this demonetization exercise has been undertaken by this government as part of India's subservience to its neo-liberalism.

*(From: The CPI(M) Central Committee communiqué; 8 January, 2017)*

## Countrywide TUs Joint Agitation against Demonetisation

Joint meeting attended by all 10 central trade union organisations (CTUOs), held on 11 January, gave call for countrywide joint demonstrations at state capital / district headquarters / industrial centres on 28 January protesting against demonetisation. Noting the ongoing protest by several trade unions, the CTUOs decided to carry the movement forward jointly.

The joint statement noted, "Reports have been pouring in from all over the country during last two

# CITU PROTEST AGAINST DEMONETISATION



**Jharkhand**



**Odisha**



**Uttar Pradesh**

**Uttarakhand**



# CITU PROTEST AGAINST DEMONETISATION



Andhra Pradesh



Kerala

Delhi



Haryana

Punjab



# SCHEME WORKERS STRIKE



**Kolkata, West Bengal**



**Agartala, Tripura**

**Bhubaneswar, Odisha**



**Haryana**

**Ludhiana, Punjab**



# SCHEME WORKERS STRIKE



**Andhra Pradesh**



**Telangana**



**Tamilnadu**

months, about closure of thousands of small and medium enterprises...Lakhs of migrant workers employed in the construction, brick kiln, textile and garments, jewellery, leather, sports goods etc have lost the work. According to recent study by the All India Manufacturers Organisation, in the first 34 days since demonetisation micro small scale industries suffered 35% job losses and a 50% dip in their revenues. It has also projected 60% drop in employment and 55% loss in revenue by March, 2017. There is large scale reverse migration to rural areas. More than 100 people have died due to demonetisation onslaught and its impact on the people...It will further increase the already wide income inequalities. It is only intended to help finance capital by sucking in people's money into the banks for their recapitalization so that they can provide cheap credit to the big corporates and business houses.

The government is refusing to take concrete action of even recovering black-money in domestic soil being generated by huge direct tax-default to the tune of Rs.5 lakh crores every year, speculation in the commodity market, under-invoicing and over-invoicing in foreign and domestic trade by big traders, deliberate default of bank loans etc... Farmers are being compelled to make distress sale of their produce, both grains and vegetables...

Instead of taking measures to mitigate the sufferings of the workers the government is branding those who voice their sufferings as black money holders, corrupt and anti-national. This is nothing but a clear exhibition of authoritarian tendencies by the government and the BJP leaders."

## **CITU's Country-wide Protest on 3 January**

In response to the call of CITU, thousands of workers brought out rallies, staged demonstrations and held public meetings on 3 January, 2017 to protest against the sufferings of the workers, peasants and other toiling sections. Following are some reports.

**Delhi-NCR:** Under CITU banner, workers brought out processions, staged dharnas and demonstrations, distributed handbills, held public meetings, submitted memoranda through the district administration and burnt effigy of the prime minister Narendra Modi at several industrial areas, workers' residential places and at markets in the Delhi-NCR region including in Gaziabad industrial area, Meerut Road and Gaziabad main city; Noida; North, South and North West Delhi.

**Haryana:** Raising demand for compensation of jobloss and for availability of sufficient currency to the public, CITU organised a rally, held public meeting and burnt effigy of Modi government at Rohtak addressed by CITU state general secretary Jaibhagawan and other state leaders and leaders of several unions.

**Uttar Pradesh:** At Lucknow, CITU staged dharna and held public meeting in front of Ambedkar statue addressed by CITU state and unions leaders. Programme was organised at other district headquarters also.

**Uttarakhand:** Workers under CITU banner brought out rallies, marched on the main streets and staged demonstration in front of district administration in Dehradun and held public meeting addressed by the CITU and its unions leaders. At Vikasnagar subdivision also CITU unions workers staged demonstration and submitted memorandum to the prime minister through the ADM demanding compensation for the job loss.

**Jharkhand:** DVC Shramik Union, Maithan Branch in Dhanbad district organised public meeting addressed by the union leaders

**Kerala:** The withdrawal of currency with denomination 1000 and 500 affected mostly the common man and daily labours. These categories of people are struggling due to loss of work and lack of cash to meet immediate and short term obligation. Thousands of daily labours have lost their jobs. In these circumstances the central committee of CITU had called for a nationwide protest on 3 January 2017. Accordingly Protest March and meetings were conducted throughout the districts of Kerala.

# Workers–Peasants–Agricultural Workers

## Martyrs Day on 19 January

Hannan Mollah

General Secretary, AIKS

*[Extracts from the article published in People's Democracy, 9-15 January, 2017]*

CITU, AIAWU and AIKS have jointly decided to observe January 19 as Martyrs Day all over the country. On that day, where these organisations are working, massive militant rallies and demonstrations at the district centres will be organised to highlight the Modi government's anti-people, anti-worker, anti-peasant policies which have disastrous effects on all aspects of life for the majority of people. The corporate, communal and authoritarian central government and many state governments, in aggressive pursuit of the neo-liberal economic policies are causing unprecedented miseries in the life of the vast majority of peasantry, agricultural workers and all workers in organised and unorganised sectors. It is the bounden duty of our organisations to mobilise mass of the people in the struggle against those onslaughts by the ruling classes.

The 19<sup>th</sup> of January is a martyrs' day. On that day in 1982, the glorious struggle of workers and peasants all over the country faced barbaric attack by the police in different parts of the country. Ten comrades – workers, peasants and agricultural labourers – were killed in police firing on that day.

The meeting of the NCC (National Campaign Committee) of trade unions, held in Delhi on March 23, 1981, decided to hold a national convention in Bombay to take up the people's genuine issues for nationwide movement. On June 4, 1981, all major trade unions - CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, BMS; all India federations of the public sector and of many in private sector joined the convention. The convention decided to organise first all India general strike on January 19, 1982 and series of regional conventions for its preparation, rallies in different parts of the country on November 3, 1981 and a massive Parliament March on November 23. This Parliament March was the first and largest ever "Delhi Chalo" in which several lakhs of workers, employees, agricultural workers and peasants took part. This historic rally also exhorted the nation for the all India general strike on January 19, 1982.

A 13 point charter of demands for the struggle was formulated which, besides the working class demands, major demands of rural peasantry and agricultural workers included like remunerative prices for agricultural produce; minimum wage, comprehensive central legislation and social security for the agricultural workers; public distribution for all essential commodities; action against black marketers and hoarders etc. Important demands of the workers were: need based minimum wage, amendment to Bonus Act for bonus for all workers, full neutralisation of rise in cost of living, ban on retrenchment and closure, unemployment allowances, stopping of victimisation of workers, recognition of union by secret ballot, repeal of NSA 1980 and ESMA 1981, full trade union rights etc. But the inclusion of demands of the peasantry was the reflection of rising consciousness of the trade union movement.

The strike on January 19, 1982 was massive, historical and successful. In West Bengal and Kerala, there was total bandh and successful strike in most parts of working class centres. The government unleashed oppression and propagated falsehood on radio and in newspapers. Finally, INTUC did not join. In spite of all these, the strike was the most successful action of the working people of the country.

The peasants and agricultural workers union extended support to the general strike and took part in the strike in a big way. This made the worker-peasant unity a reality in the history of our people's movement. 35 years ago, this was most militant historical class struggle after independence when urban and rural workers joined together.

AIAWU and BKMU of Tamil Nadu organised successful strike in the rural areas along with trade unions. There was police firing by the AIADMK government and three comrades were killed. In Nagapattanam district, two AIAWU activists Comrade Anjan and Comrade Nagooran were killed in police firing at Thirumagnanam. One BKMU activist Comrade Gnanasekharan was killed in Thiru Thurai Poondy. The trade

union stood by those families and collected a fund of Rs 40,000 for them. Since then, CITU collects about Rs 3 lakh and gives to the AIAWU for organising agricultural workers in the state every year.

In Uttar Pradesh also, the workers, peasants and agricultural workers and students took part in 19 January general strike in a big way. Before the strike, the students of Benaras Hindu University Students Union organised huge meeting in support of the bandh. The Congress government police resorted to brutal lathi charge and arrested 250 students including SFI leaders. Still they failed to suppress the unprecedented successful bandh. On that day, huge crowds of workers, peasants, agricultural workers and students were mobilised at Baburi Bazar on the Banaras-Mirzapur road, then in Benaras district, now in Chandauli district,

### **3 General Strike Martyrs of Tamilnadu**

**3 comrades were martyred on this day in 1982 during general strike. Anjan and Nagooran were agricultural workers from village Thirumeygnanam in the present day Nagapattinam district. In the early morning on 19 January 1982, workers of this 'Red' village stopped the first bus and the tyres were deflated. After 3 hours, police came, raided the village, looted houses and fired at people killing these two comrades. A martyrs' column has been erected in the village.**

**The other martyr was Gnanasekaran from Rettaipuli village near Mannargudi in the present Thiruvalur district. He was also an agricultural worker and was picketing the bus going through the village. Police attacked the picketers and opened fire killing Gnanasekaran.**

and organised blockade on the road and transport was totally crippled. A truck load of PAC force led by Satyanarayan Singh, Police Inspector started indiscriminate firing on the peaceful dharna. Comrade Bholu Paswan, the mandal secretary of Kisan Sabha, was leading the agitation and he died in the firing. After that, his younger brother Lalchand Paswan, an SFI leader and convenor of Ashok Inter College, took the leadership. He also fell down due to police firing. Another 32 comrades were injured in the police firing. Both the brothers were CPI(M) members and kisan and student leaders. They sacrificed their life for the cause of the working class and the poor. The Congress government and police acted cowardly and took away the dead bodies to 75 km distance at Ramsanchi and clandestinely burned them without informing their family. But they wrote history with their blood of glorious worker-peasant-student unity and struggle against the anti-people policies of the government. (*The Working Class; March, 2016*)

In spite of the struggles for three decades, many of those demands are not yet accepted by the governments. On the other hand, the problems have accentuated due to the blind and aggressive implementation of neo-liberal economic policies. To fight against that, we have to strengthen our unity and build up joint struggle all over the country. This

joint observation of the Martyrs Day is an action in that direction. Large number of workers, peasants and agricultural workers will be mobilised on that day and massive militant rallies will be organised in each district. This year, demonetisation has added further difficulties to the day-to-day life of common people. That will be highlighted in the struggle.

The importance of the struggle was that it brought rural and urban working class together and laid a foundation of worker-peasant alliance. Ten comrades, workers, agricultural workers and peasants and students sacrificed their life for a common struggle. This was the major and first nation-wide worker-peasant joint struggle. Its political importance was immense. In the people's democratic revolution of our country, worker-peasant alliance is the cornerstone of struggle. For this reason, the political parties in a joint statement at that time hailed the working class for raising the demands of the peasantry. Comrade BT Ranadive praised this role of the trade unions and asked for raising their consciousness further in future.

Keeping this in mind, CITU, AIAWU and AIKS have taken the initiative to strengthen the unity of the rural and urban working people and peasantry.

## **19 January Joint Action Day**

Commemorating 1982 martyrs in the first general strike for workers, peasants, agricultural workers and people's common demands and to unitedly meet the present challenges; in response to the joint call of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU; thousands of workers, peasants and agricultural workers joined rallies, staged demonstrations and dharnas and held public meetings on 19 January 2017 in district centres and at lower

level across the country. The programme was implemented in all districts of Tripura, West Bengal, Kerala and Tamilnadu; in the districts of Bhiwani, Hissar, Fatehabad, Kaithal, jhind and Rohtak in Haryana; Lucknow and Baburi Bazar in Chandauli district in Uttar Pradesh; in Bakaro, Jamtara, Dumka, Singhbhum, Sahebganj and Ranchi of Jharkhand; Darbhanga, Begusarai, Bettiah, Samastipur, Jamui, Vashali, Nalanda and Patna of Bihar; Gwalior, Murena, Indore and Ratlam of Madhya Pradesh; in several districts of Telangana, Assam and Karnataka; and state level demonstration in front of the Assembly at Bhubaneswar in Odisha. Following are some states' reports.

**Jharkhand:** The programme was implemented in 11 district headquarters and also in 13 sub-divisional and 24 block headquarters with minimum 100 plus workers-peasants-agricultural workers participation at each place staging dharnas and demonstrations. The issues of impact of demonetisation on peasants and workers, engaged in informal and traditional sectors, seriously affecting their livelihood, income and employment; distress sale of paddy to money lenders and brokers in absence of paddy purchasing centres at MSP rate; non-availability of currency causing tremendous loss of Rabi production; equal pay for equal work in all industries; withdrawal of the bill for amendment of CNT-SPT Acts were strongly raised during dharna and demonstration.

In Sahebganj, Dumka, Jamtara, Godda, Bokaro, East Singhbhum, Saraikela, Ramgarh, Hazaribagh, Sonahatu block (Ranchi), Madhupur block (Deoghar) local issues were also raised. (*Inputs: Prakash Viplav and Surajit Sinha*)

**Odisha:** Hundreds of workers, peasants, agriculture labour and Adivasis marched in a colorful procession to PMG Square in Bhubaneswar jointly under the banners of state CITU, AIKS, AIAWU and Adivasi Adhikar Mancha (AAM) and staged day long dharna on 19 January demanding adequate compensation for crop loss, jobs loss and wage loss due to demonetization; remunerative price for crops; minimum wages not less than 18000 rupees; 200 days work under MGNREGA etc.

The dharna was addressed by Lambodar Nayak, Janardan Pati, Sivaji Patnaik, Dusmanta Das from CITU; Jagannath Mishra and Jameswar Samantaray and Suresh Panigrahi from AIKS; Nityananda Parida and Sisir Hui from AIAWU; Salo Marandi and Chamburu Soren from AAM. Joint programme were also held at Rourkela and Angul. (*Inputs: Ramesh Jena*)

**Bihar:** In front of district administration of 10 districts of Patna, Begusarai, Samastipur, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Nalanda, Jamui, Bettiah and Motihari; about 1000 workers, peasants and agricultural workers staged joint demonstration. Among the unions, members of beedi, construction, scheme workers and medical representatives unions mainly participated.

**Telangana:** The day was observed in 21 district head quarters and 1471 participated. A state level seminar was held at SVK Hyderabad on 17 January on the subject of "*Land acquisition in the state and challenges and solutions*" in which state vice president of AIKS Sarampalli Mallareddy was the chief guest. The seminar condemned the attitude of Telengana State government approving the 2016 land acquisition bill unilaterally and undemocratically in the legislative assembly diluting the 2013 bill. AIAWU vice president B. Venkat, CITU vice president R. Sudha Bhaskar spoke on the subject. The seminar was presided over by M. Saibabu, B. Chandrareddy and Venkatramulu. BSNL, insurance, bank, Pearles, medical representatives, postal employees, LIC agents, defense employees participated. Similar conventions took place in 21 districts on 19 January. State leaders of three organizations attended.

**Tamilnadu:** Total 8033 workers, peasants and agricultural workers participated in joint rallies, demonstrations and public meetings in 34 districts of the state with 55 to 2000 participation in each centre.

**West Bengal:** 48<sup>th</sup> session of CITU state council and the district committees made serious efforts to make the programme successful. CITU, AIKS and AIAWU West Bengal units jointly made the programme successful mainly at 4 places in Burdwan district; 4 places in Nadia district with 500-1500 participation in each; at 10 places in Howrah district holding processions, street corner meetings and gate meetings of jute mills; in 12 block headquarters in Paschim Medinipur district with 30-300 participation; 6 places in Murshidabad district; 2 places in Darjeeling district; holding hall meeting in Dakshin Dinajpur district; at 9 places in Purba Medinipur district and in Birbhum district.

# SCHEME WORKERS STRIKE

## Scheme Workers Countrywide Joint Strike

CITU 15<sup>th</sup> Conference gave call for joint strike of scheme workers, for the first time, on 20 January, 2017. The reports being received at the CITU centre indicate huge participation of the different sections of scheme workers in this strike in all states in India. Strike was successful in 23 states across the country. Over four lakh scheme workers came out on streets in huge demonstrations and rallies at the state and district levels demanding recognition as workers, minimum wages, pension and other social security benefits and adequate allocations for the schemes.

Following are some statewise reports. *(Rest of the reports will be continued in the March, 2017 issue of the Working Class)*

**Andhra Pradesh:** Despite government's threat for termination of services, about 1.25 lakh of scheme workers joined the unprecedented joint strike in response to the call CITU 15<sup>th</sup> conference including about 70,000 Anganwadi employees, 30,000 ASHA workers, 20,000 MDM workers, 5,000 national Rural Livelihood Mission workers and joined in rallies, dharnas, demonstrations and public meetings by National Rural Health Mission contract employees, 2<sup>nd</sup> ANMs, National Urban Health Mission employees, Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan employees and MNREGA employees. 3000 strong huge rally was brought out at Vijayawada and holding public meeting addressed by CPI(M) MLC MVS Sarma, CITU state general secretary A. Gafoor, CITU national secretary G. Baby Rani and others.

**Telangana:** Despite government's threat to prevent the strike, out of total 2.5 lakh scheme workers in the state more than 2 lakh Anganwadi employees, ASHA, MDM, IKP, VOA, 2<sup>nd</sup> ANM, Urban Health Mission workers, resource persons of MEMPA, Sakashara Bharathi workers, MNREGA field assistants, SSA etc joined the strike. Rallies and dharnas were held in 380 mandals and 32 district headquarters participated by 59,177 striking workers. Pre-strike campaign included district level workshops, 17,000 posters, more than one lakh pamphlets distribution. CITU leaders joined the campaign in big way.

**Tamilnadu:** In 26 districts the strike was complete with 10,000 Anganwadi employees joining the strike. State unit added the demands related to demonetisation and agrarian distress. Demonstrations were held in Salem, Namakkal, Dharmapuri, Thiruvavur and Trivellore with average 800 employees participation. Due to *Jallikattu* agitation and dislocation of transport, demonstrations could not be held in several districts. Pre-strike campaign was extensive. More than one lakh pamphlets were distributed. Following the strike government concerned officials initiated discussion with the striking CITU unions.

**Punjab:** Thousands Anganwadi employees, Asha and MDM workers and village chawkidars went on strike and held protest rallies and demonstrations all over the state. Over 20,000 scheme workers participated in rallies and demonstrations at Amritsar, Barnala, Ludhiana, Sangrur, Mansa, Moga, Tarantaran, Garhshankar, Nawanshehar, Bathinda, Jalndhar and at several other places. AIFWA national president Usha Rani and state leaders of scheme workers unions and of CITU addressed the rallies.

**West Bengal:** Scheme workers of ICDS, ASHA, Mid-Day-Meal, SSA, SSK, MSK, Urban Health Project, NCLP and Vocational Trainers took part in the strike and demonstrative programmes. 12,000 plus scheme workers took part in the central rally at Kolkata. Md. Selim, MP, Sujana Chakraborty, leader of LF group in Assembly besides CITU leaders Shyamal Chakraborty, Dipak Dasgupta and Ratna Dutta addressed the rally. Month long preparation and pre-strike campaign included joint meeting of the unions of all the scheme workers; distribution of thousands of handbills with 50,000 handbills and 10,000 posters from state centre; banners and placards; and collecting mass signatures from common people. TMC hoodlums locally began threatening to women workers. Participation in strike was huge in some districts but in some parts of the terror stricken districts workers created camouflage to make the strike successful befooling the TMC hooligans.

## **Meeting on Social Security Benefits for Scheme Workers**

Union Labour Ministry called a meeting of central trade unions on 19 January, 2017 to discuss about providing social security benefits for scheme workers. Secretary and joint secretary of the ministry of labour and officers from ESI and EPF were present. Among central trade unions CITU, BMS, AITUC, HMS, AIUTUC, AICCTU and TUCC representatives attended the meeting. INTUC was not invited. CITU president K. Hemalata represented CITU.

A background note on providing social security for unorganised sector workers was circulated. It outlined the different schemes available under the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act and stated that there was no mandatory social security coverage of these for the scheme workers. Some of them were available on voluntary basis.

While the note mentions that 'for the coverage of these scheme workers' ESIC has formulated a health insurance scheme and outlined the salient features of the said scheme, later the secretary said that that was not the case. The outlined scheme provides only limited benefits and suggests contribution of Rs. 200 per month from the workers.

### **CITU made the following points**

CITU welcomed the initiative. Anganwadi workers and helpers, ASHAs and midday meal workers cannot be considered as 'unorganised sector' workers. They are working in different government departments; the schemes are central government schemes implemented by the state governments. Many of them have been working since decades. The government appoints them, decides their work and working conditions, pays them remuneration and takes disciplinary action; they are also being 'retired' by the government.

45<sup>th</sup> ILC discussed the issues of scheme workers as a special agenda and made concrete recommendations that the scheme workers be recognised as workers, they should be paid minimum wages and social security benefits including pension. It was the labour ministry's responsibility to ensure implementation of the recommendations of the 45<sup>th</sup> ILC. Dealing the issue piecemeal will not be of much help. The ministry should have also provided the concrete proposals of the 'High level committee' constituted on the issue (under the chairmanship of secretary labour and employment with representatives from ministries of health and family welfare, WCD, HRD and finance and with which DG, ESIC and CPFC are also associated with as members).

The midday meal workers are paid remuneration only for 10 months in a year. Social security should include maternity benefit and pension etc also, not just ESI and PF. The ASHAs and midday meal workers are not provided with any paid maternity leave. ASHAs and midday meal workers should also be provided paid maternity leave of six months.

The proposals relate to only ESI, though coverage of PF was also mentioned in the note.

All the benefits under ESI Act should be provided to the scheme workers, not partial benefits. The contribution for ESI and PF should be borne by the government.

All the trade unions expressed similar views.

The representative of EPFO informed about their proposal. He said that the scheme workers were eligible to be covered by EPF which only requires that there should be 20 workers and the activity should be notified. They requested the government to issue a notification including the activities performed by the scheme workers under the PF Act. They have proposed a contribution of 10% each from the employer and workers for PF. The representative of ESIC said that providing all the benefits under the Act would cost minimum Rs 3200 crores per year.

The secretary concluded by saying that she would discuss with the finance ministry on the basis of the views expressed by the trade unions and try to recommend what was practicable.

- Hemalata

## **CITU 15<sup>th</sup> Conference Resolution on Scheme Workers and Beneficiaries**

15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), being held at Puri in Odisha from 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016;

**Noted**

That, tens of lakhs of Scheme Workers, employed for implementation of Central Government and some State Governments' welfare schemes like Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Mid Day Meal (MDMP), Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), National Health Mission (NHM), National Child Labour Project (NCLP), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyayas of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rozgar Sevaks of MGNREGA, Shiksha Mitras, Panchayat Sevaks etc;

Rendering commendable services mostly to lakhs of poor rural families including the agricultural workers, farmers and rural manual workers in reducing malnutrition and improving immunization; in institutional deliveries reducing infant and maternal mortality rates; curtailing school dropout rates; rehabilitating the child labour; in implementation of MNREGA etc;

Majority of both, the Workers and the Beneficiaries, belonging to socially marginalized sections;

**Further Noted,**

That, these Scheme Workers are compelled to work for long period beyond working hours, are being imposed additional work responsibilities of the Governments and Institutions without compensation; non-payment of full wages in a year and delayed and cuts in payment of wages; are subjected to supervision and disciplinary actions by government's administration;

But are deprived of their status as government employees or workers and are chained in an exploitative wage system in the name of 'honourarium' being paid to 'volunteers' despite tripartite 45<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour Conference recommendation to recognize them as 'workers' under law, pay minimum wage and attendant social security benefits;

That, both the Scheme Workers and Beneficiaries are being deprived by the Governments by weakening these welfare schemes; by resorting to cut in budgetary allocations for these Schemes; by 'direct money transfer' to beneficiaries instead of implementation of the schemes; and handing over these welfare schemes of the Governments to private NGOs and corporate for profiteering; etc.

Under these circumstances, this Conference

**Demands,**

- For the benefit of the Scheme Beneficiaries and Workers full and increasing budgetary allocations of funds for each of these schemes; further strengthening the schemes and their centres; and expanding with new welfare schemes; to stop privatization of any Government's welfare schemes, and for PDS coverage of all beneficiaries and workers; and
- To implement 45<sup>th</sup> ILC recommendations by recognizing the scheme workers as government employees / workers under labour laws; payment of minimum wage linked with consumer price index for the working class; all social security benefits including retirement benefits.

**This 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of CITU Calls**

Upon all CITU state committees

- To form campaign committees with the representatives of the organizations of the scheme workers, of other workers and of agricultural workers and farmers in districts and lower levels, where ever possible, with state coordination;
- Launch intensive campaign under joint banner mainly in rural areas with campaign materials; hold village meetings; and deciding joint demonstrative programmes at the Scheme centres; block and district headquarters, culminating in state capitals; and

Upon its concerned unions / federations / committees to launch simultaneous campaigns among the concerned workers on these demands and decide on action programmes.

**This 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of CITU Considers**

This joint movement as an important integral part of country's democratic movement breaking caste and communal barriers particularly in rural India, at presents under the initiative of the working class, and can inflict a big blow to the feudal structures.

# STATES

## Delhi- NCR

### **Delhi Municipal Contract Workers Towards Big Victory**

After 3 days work-boycott in all 12 zones and indefinite demonstration, dharna and hunger strike in front of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation head office by hundreds of contract workers of three municipal corporations of Delhi during 16–18 January; the North Delhi Municipal Corporation Commissioner, who is also the nodal officer of all three municipal corporations of Delhi, invited the leaders of agitating Anti-Malaria Ekta Karamchari Union, affiliated to CITU, for discussion. A delegation of the Union led CITU Delhi state general secretary Anurag Saxenna held fruitful discussion with the commissioner on the Union's charter of demands for revision of service conditions and for regularization in jobs of all 3500 Domestic Breeding Checkers (DBC).

After discussion, an understanding was reached in which the administration assured to provide all statutory benefits like annual bonus, leaves, paid holidays, PF and medical benefits. It was also agreed that the Union will give written proposals within 2 / 3 weeks on suggestion for regularisation from present date and appointing them in permanent 'field workers' post etc. It was also assured that after consultation, the revised service condition would be applicable to all DBC employees in all 3 municipal corporations.

After the additional commissioner and labour welfare officers came at dharna place, conveyed the assurances and appealed to end the hunger strike and agitation, the Union called off the agitation. CITU, Delhi state committee congratulated the DBC employees and their union for the successful conclusion of their agitation.

*(Inputs: Anurag Saxenna)*

## Gujarat

### **Massive Scheme Workers Rally**

It was an unprecedented 15000 strong state level rally of Anganwadi and ASHA workers, coming from 28 districts, at Gandhi Nagar in Ahmadabad on 5 December in response to the joint call of CITU affiliated Gujarat Anganwadi Karmchari Sangathan (GAKS) and Asha Health Workers Union demanding wage increase, minimum wage, social security benefits and other state level demands.

The meeting was presided by CITU state president Subodh Mehta and addressed by GSKS and ASHA union leaders Nasimben Makrani, Ashok Sompura, Kailas Rohit and Bharti Makwana; CITU state general secretary Arun Mehta, other CITU and AIDWA leaders and of fraternal organisations.

BMS union tried to mislead the workers by false propaganda to sabotage the rally but failed miserably. On this occasion, several leaders and members of BMS union joined CITU union.

## Tamilnadu

### **Successful Struggle in a MNC Company**

The contract workers of the multinational Haworth Company's factory in Sriperumbudur won a major struggle recently. 6 months before, the contract workers formed a union with the help of CITU and applied for its registration. The labour department kept it pending, under influence of the management, on the plea of verification. Under RTI Act, CITU sought information from deputy director of Industrial Safety and Health about the number of permanent and contract workers employed by the company, the number of contractors and their contract details etc. Knowing about this petition, the company dismissed 15 workers of 3-5 years of service who are the leading functionaries of the union.

Against this attack, the workers resorted to 5 days successful strike during on 5-9 December, 2016. Ultimately the management had to reinstate all 15 dismissed workers and regularize all 80 contract workers including the reinstated workers in jobs. One of the major reasons for the management to concede to the workers demands was that none of the contractors had applied for license from the labour department.

Contractors SMS, IQMS and TSR had been working for past 3 years without any license. PF commissioner assured the union that the department would initiate action for recovery of the PF amounts from the contractors. (Inputs: S. Kannan).

## EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

### Countrywide Agitation by CITU unions

15<sup>th</sup> conference of CITU decided to stage joint demonstrations of workers at work places on 22 December and submitting memoranda to the respective managements for implementation of Supreme Court's order on equal pay for equal work to contract, temporary and casual workers as applicable to the regular workers. (See 15<sup>th</sup> Conference Resolution; *The Working Class*; January, 2017). Following are some statewise reports.

**Delhi-NCR:** At the call of CITU a massive protest was organized before the Central Labour Ministry staging demonstration and holding public meeting addressed by CITU treasurer M.L. Malkotia and state general secretary Anurag Saxena. Protesters included employees from Indira Gandhi Airport, DU, JNU, ILBS Hospital, Vasant Kunj, Chacha Nehru Hospital, Geeta colony, GTB Hospital, Dilshad Garden, Hedgewar Hospital, Karkardooma, DJB, CONCORE, CWC, IRCTC, CBSE, ICDS, DBC-SDMC, EDMC, NDMC, New Delhi Municipal Council, Construction workers, Noida Authority, Terex International Noida, CEL Sahibabad, Cooper staradard, Radiant Polymers Sahibabad, Race Course, Gau Shala, Hotel, Vendors, Aganwadi etc. One leader from all these addressed the gathering. Regional Labour Commissioner received the memorandum on his behalf of the union labour minister.

**Punjab:** Impressive rallies and demonstrations were organized at more than 30 places. At several places effigies of central and state governments were burnt. Rallies and demonstrations were held at Bathinda, Mansa, Barnala, Sangrur, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshehar, Ropar, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Ghanaur. Pathankot, Rai, Kot, Tarantaran, Patti, Moga, Mukatsar etc. About 8000 workers belonging to various CITU affiliated unions took part. The major participation was of contract workers of Punjab Roadways PUN BUS and contract workers of various other sectors.

At the call of Punjab Roadways PUN BUS Contract Workers Union Punjab (CITU) 2000 contract workers organized *Chakka Jam* for 4 hours demanding Equal Pay for Equal work.

**Jammu & Kashmir:** As a part of country-wide protest demonstrations, the workers engaged as casual, contract, ad-hoc, temporary, daily wagers employed in different sectors across the state under the banner of CITU held a largely participated demonstration at Press Club, Jammu holding red flags, banners and placards in their hands and shouting slogans for implementation of Supreme Court judgement on "equal pay for equal work". CITU state president M.Y Tarigami, general secretary Om Parkash, its senior leader Sham Parsad Kesar and others addressed the rally.

**Kerala:** In all districts, conventions were held during 15–18 December; and on 22 December rallies and public meetings were held in 46 centres. Thousands of contract and casual workers were participated in this programme. State committee pamphlet on the issue was distributed by the district committees. CITU state secretary K.N. Gopinath inaugurated dharna in front of HMT gate at Kochi on 20 December to implement Equal Pay for Equal Work judgement of the Supreme Court.

FSUI: At the call of CITU conference, Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI) held demonstration in front of the head office of the Shipping Corporation Of India (SCI) in Mumbai on 22 December implementation of Supreme Court's order on Equal Pay for Equal Work. The union also notified intensifying agitation if the order is not implemented for the shore employees as well as seafarers.

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

State	Centre	Oct. 2016	Nov. 2016	State	Centre	Oct. 2016	Nov. 2016
AP	GUNTUR	273	271	MHR	MUMBAI	287	285
	VIJAYWADA	271	268		NAGPUR	312	311
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	278	277		NASIK	291	289
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	250	251		PUNE	280	280
	GUWAHATI	246	244		SHOLAPUR	295	294
	LABAC SILCHAR	260	260	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	293	293
	MARIANI JORHAT	245	245		ROURKELA	297	300
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	242	239	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	285	287
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	311	308	PUN	AMRITSAR	279	279
CHD	CHANDIGARH	272	273		JALANDHAR	274	275
CHS	BHILAI	313	313		LUDHIANA	277	277
DLI	DELHI	253	252	RJN	AJMER	258	255
GOA	GOA	288	285		BHILWARA	273	272
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	266	261		JAIPUR	258	264
	BHAVNAGAR	265	262	TN	CHENNAI	250	250
	RAJKOT	272	272		COIMBATORE	248	248
	SURAT	254	254		COONOR	273	272
	VADODARA	267	267		MADURAI	264	263
HRY	FARIDABAD	256	254		SALEM	270	260
	YAMUNANAGAR	271	273		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	265	264
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	248	248	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	288	287
J&K	SRINAGAR	249	252		HYDERABAD	243	243
JRK	BOKARO	287	278		WARRANGAL	285	285
	GIRIDIH	307	303	TRP	TRIPURA	252	253
	JAMSHEDPUR	322	321	UP	AGRA	298	299
	JHARIA	310	307		GHAZIABAD	274	275
	KODARMA	329	325		KANPUR	290	290
	RANCHI HATIA	313	311		LUCKNOW	280	279
KNT	BELGAUM	280	280		VARANASI	285	285
	BENGLURU	281	278	WB	ASANSOL	305	305
	HUBLI DHARWAR	291	293		DARJEELING	265	265
	MERCARA	285	285		DURGAPUR	303	303
	MYSORE	280	281		HALDIA	308	307
KRL	ERNAKULAM	270	269		HOWRAH	267	267
	MUNDAKKAYAM	283	282		JALPAIGURI	272	270
	QUILON	295	297		KOLKATA	269	263
MP	BHOPAL	275	273		RANIGANJ	260	254
	CHHINDWARA	285	285		SILIGURI	260	262
	INDORE	256	255				
	JABALPUR	277	277				
<b>ALL INDIA INDEX</b>						<b>278</b>	<b>277</b>

**CITU Journal  
The Working Class**

Be Subscriber

**(Each copy – Rs. 10)**

- **Individual Subscriber** - Annual subscription – Rs.100/- for 1 copy;
- **Agency** - Minimum 5 copies; 25% discount as commission;
- **Payment** - By cheque - Drawn in favour of "The Working Class"  
payable at Canara Bank, DDU Marg Branch, New Delhi – 110 002  
By bank money transfer - SB A/C No. 0158101019569;  
IFSC Code: CNRB 0000158;  
With email / letter intimation
- **Correspond with** - The Manager, The Working Class, CITU centre, BTR Bhavan,  
13A Rouse Avenue, New Delhi -110 002: email: [citubtr@gmail.com](mailto:citubtr@gmail.com)  
Phone: (011) 23221306 Fax: (011) 23221284

**Note:** Please give full address of the subscriber / agency with postal pin code and email ID, if any, for correspondence.

# 19 January Joint Programme



**Bihar**



**Jharkhand**



**Kerala**

# 19 January Joint Programme

## Remembering 1982 Martyrs

(Report page 18)



**Paying Tribute to Martyrs at Thirumeignanam in Tamilnadu**



**Rally & Meeting at Baburi Bazar in Uttar Pradesh**