(Pages- 28)

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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

Telangana Road Transport Workers Strike

(Report Page 13)

Protest and deserted bus stand at Hyderabad

Strike & Solidarity in Muthoot Finance

(Report Page 8)

On Strike

Striking Workers in Kerala

In Solidarity

Tamilnadu

Andhra Pradesh

Editorial

Improve Consumption - Improve Production; Save the Country

Inside Page

All reports show that demonetisation and GST caused huge damage to both industrial and agrarian production. Both these areas are facing serious crisis. Country's economy itself is facing serious crisis showing recessionary trends accompanied by slump in production; huge joblosses and spiraling unemployment.

Production and consumption are inter-related and mutually dependent. Lack of consumption of commodities is the main reason of economic slowdown. RBI report shows that domestic consumption level has gone down. Quoting from national sample survey, Nobel Laureate Abhijit Banerjee recently said that the average consumption level in India has gone for the first time since 1970s. This should have been a warning signal. Average expenditure, at current price level, fell from Rs.1587 in 2014 to Rs.1524 in 2017-18 per person per month.

But, instead of investment for increasing domestic consumption, BJP government is relying on concessions to corporates and relying on the market to decide. Now, Modi government is tinkering with the minimum wage, to lower and replace it with national floor level wage as more concessions to corporates, at the cost of the workers.

In this background, improving minimum wage – employability – employment; remunerative prices of agrarian produce; and, by those, increasing the level of consumption of vast masses are the three integral components. This is the priority agenda for struggle of the masses, independently and jointly, for their own interest and for the regeneration of country's economy and save the country from ruin and selling out to foreign and domestic corporates.

The stage is set for 8 January, 2020 countrywide workers general strike.

Condolence

Homage to Comrade R. Shrinivas

CITU was grieved at the demise of veteran trade union leader Comrade R. Shrinivas on 11 October 2019 at Bangalore due to massive heart attack while attending a meeting.

Comrade Shrinivas was the leader of CITU union in BPL at Bangalore and led historic strike in 1998. He was victimized and implicated in a false case by the management for which he was sentenced for life imprisonment. He had spent more than 16 years in jail and was released only in 2016. He continued to remain committed to the cause of the working class and, immediately after the release, became active in the trade union activities in Bangalore city. He was the Vice President of CITU Karnataka State Committee.

CITU conveyed deepest condolences to all his comrades and family members.

India

Going Down in Scale

- UNICEF report '*The State of the World's Children 2019'*, published on 16 October 2019, shows that in India malnutrition has caused 69% deaths of children below 5 years of age.
- "*Malnutrition continues to be the underlying risk factor for the deaths of children under the age of five years* of age in India and contributed to 68.2 percent of such deaths in 2017." according report in the prestigious medical journal *Lancet.*
- The above UNICEF report also says that every second woman in India is anaemic.
- India has slipped to 102th position in the Global Hunger Index 2019 of 117 countries, slipping from its 2018 position and behind its neighbours Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- RBI report says, at the end of March 2017, gross bank consumer goods loans stood at a Rs.20,791 crore with constant growth for past 6 years. But, post-demonetisation, it has dipped by 73% till September 2019 - in fiscal 2017-18 by 5.2% and in 2018-19 by an astounding 68%. The loans to the consumer durables continued to fall by 10.7%.
- Government's total debt burden has increased by 49% to Rs.82 lakh crores during last four and half years of Modi government, revealed in the Status Paper on Government Debt released on 0n 11 October, 2019.
- Index of Industrial Production (IIP) shows –

  IIP growth in manufacturing for April-July period of 2019-20 dropped to 2.8% compared to 5.6% in the same period last year; - A drop to 3.3% from 5.4% last year in overall IIP growth for April-July; - Capital Goods production actually contracted by 4.3% as against 7.1% growth in the same period last year; - Consumer durables production contracted in the same period by 2.7%.
- World Economic Forum Report 2019 in its Global Competitiveness report shows India dropped to 68th position, a drop of 10 steps in one year.

Workers Big Victories

Delhi Minimum Wage - More than Rs.15,000 Now; Supreme Court Orders Payment

"The employees are entitled to the minimum wage at all times and under all circumstances. An employer who cannot pay the minimum wage has no right to engage labour and no justification to run the industry." **- The Supreme Court Judgement, 1991**

In a historic Order on 14 October 2019, the Supreme Court of India has decided Rs.14,842 as the minimum wage at November 2018 price level for the unskilled workers in NCT Delhi upholding the criteria of fixation of minimum wage as per recommendations of the 15th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) and 1991 Supreme Court judgement. The SC Order asked the government of Delhi to go ahead with its notification. With this notification the minimum wage for the lowest category of minimum wages, for the unskilled workers, will be Rs.14,842 plus DA based on price index.

Following the 7th CPC recommendations for the central government employees fixing minimum wage at Rs.18,000 on the basis of 15th ILC and 1991 SC judgement; all central trade unions and national federations raising the demand of minimum wage of Rs.18,000 for all; and nationwide workers general strike in September 2016 inter alia pursuing this demand; for the first time, at the initiative of CITU Delhi state committee and jointly pursued by all trade unions, the minimum wage advisory board in Delhi fixed minimum wage on the basis of 15th ILC criteria and 1991 SC judgement. *(The Working Class; May, 2017)* Accordingly, Delhi government issued minimum wage notification on 3 March, 2017 with 37% wage hike.

This notification was challenged by the employers in Delhi High Court. Delhi HC scrapped the notification mainly on the ground of employers not having 'proper representation' in the Minimum Wage Advisory Board. The HC judgement was challenged in the Supreme Court by Delhi government. CITU Delhi state committee became an intervener party in this case and made its own submission.

The Supreme Court, in an interim order on 31 October 2018, had directed to implement the notification of 3 March 2017 on minimum wages till further Order; reconstitute the advisory board after scrutiny of proper representation as per law and fix minimum wage afresh and submit the draft notification before the Supreme Court. *(The Working Class; December, 2018)*

Accordingly, the minimum wage advisory board was reconstituted with larger representation, having 15 members each from employers and employees and 2 independent experts; had 4 meetings of reconstituted advisory board; fixed minimum wages at November 2018 price level and the draft notification was submitted before the Supreme Court. CITU additionally submitted petition of non-compliance of SC's interim order by several employers by not paying @ fixed minimum wage.

The Supreme Court Division Bench of Justice U. U. Lalit and Justice Aniruddha Bose, quoted in the Order the relevant portion of the submission made by the government of NCT Delhi as,-

"*Based on the average prices of food items and clothing component and other prescribed percentage of other components i.e. housing, light & fuel and education/social obligation as laid down in ILC-1957 and upheld by Hon'ble Supreme Court in civil appeal no.4336 of 1991 titles as The Workmen represented by Secretary Vs The Management of Raptakos Brett & Co. Ltd. And Anr., following proposed rates of minimum* *wages for different categories of workers, supervisory and clerical staff have been worked out in respect of all scheduled employments in Delhi, Which are:*

Schedule of Employment	Category of Workmen/ Employees	Minimum rates of wages in Rupees	
		Per Month (In Rs.)	Per Day (In Rs.)
All Schedule Employment	Unskilled	14,842/-	571/-
	Semi-Skilled	16,341/-	629/-
	Skilled	17,991/-	692/-
	Clerical and Supervisory Staff		
	Non Matriculates	16,341/-	629/-
	Matriculate but not Graduate	17,991/-	692/-
	Graduate and above	19,572/-	753/-

Rejecting the contention of employer's submission of 'capacity to pay', the Supreme Court's landmark judgement on the minimum wage in 1991 said, *"The wage structure which approximately answers the above six components is nothing more than a minimum wage at subsistence level. The employees are entitled to the minimum wage at all times and under all circumstances. An employer who cannot pay the minimum wage has no right to engage labour and no justification to run the industry*."

In their 14 October, 2019 Order, the Supreme Court directed the government of NCT Delhi to go ahead with the notification on minimum wages as per the draft placed before the Supreme Court and kept other issues in the High Court's Order and in the SLP for further hearing for final disposal of the case. Accordingly, the Delhi government is to notify the above mentioned minimum wage plus DA up to October 2019 average price index which will be more than Rs.15000 per month, the highest in the entire NCR. This will benefit millions of workers in NCT Delhi.

In a statement, CITU has congratulated the workers, its state committee and units of all other central trade unions in Delhi for successfully conducting united struggle and pursuing minimum wage demands on the basis of 15th ILC and 1991 SC judgement; and called upon its other state committees to emulate the experience of united struggle and efforts of trade unions in Delhi in this regard. *(Inputs; Anurag Saxena)* (18/10/2019)

Stop Press

Code on OSH in Parliamentary Standing Committee

The contentious draft Code on OSH (Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions) has been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Labour. The Bills on Code on OSH along with the Code on Wages was placed in the 2019 budget session. While the Code on Wages has been adopted, the Code on OSH was kept pending.

The Standing Committee met on 25 October attended by its members including E. Kareem of CPI(M), who is the CITU national Secretary and its Kerala state General Secretary; K. Subbarayan of CPI, who is the AITUC state president of Tamilnadu; M Shanmugam of DMK, who is the national General Secretary of LPF among others. The Standing Committee will meet on 11 November next.

Protect BSNL, Protect Its Employees

Agitation by United Front of Workers & Officers

The agitated BSNL employees began their immediate protest demonstrations on 1 October when September salary did not reach them on the last day of the month as per norms.

With efforts, the BSNL employees and officers formed joint forum as ‘All Unions and Associations of BSNL’ (AUAB). AUAB held its meeting on 11 October and condemned the management and the government for non-payment of salaries to the permanent employees for the month of September and to contract/casual workers for past 8 months; for misleading information and media campaign about purported impending closure of BSNL.

The meeting decided to resort to countrywide hunger strike agitation on 18 October in pursuance of demands which include – Immediate payment of September salary and its timely payment every month; - Payment of contract/casual worker wages; Payment of electricity bills, rentals etc; - Revival of BSNL by immediate allocation of 4G spectrum, extension of financial assistance / soft loan and approval of BSNL’s land monetisation policy; - Settlement of 3rd Pay Revision, Pension Revision and 30% Superannuation benefits etc.

It was decided that AUAB constituents’ leadership at all levels would participate in the hunger strike - general secretaries in corporate office; circle secretaries and district secretaries in circle and SSA offices respectively. There would be lunch hour demonstrations at all places on that day involving the entire non-executive and executive employees.

However, series of discussion was held on 17 October between the unions, led by AUAB, and C&MD, director HR and other directors. The management assured that September salary would be paid by 23 October. Rejecting the false information and media campaign about impending closure of BSNL, the C&MD informed about the progress in revival plan with number of positive steps being taken ‘despite objections from various quarters’. The C&MD requested cooperation at this critical juncture of the organisation. On his assurance, next day’s agitation was withdrawn. AUAB decided to meet on 30 October again to review the situation. (22/10/2019)

MTNL Delays Salary

Workers – Officers Decided Agitation

22,000 employees of telecom PSU in Delhi and Mumbai cities, MTNL, are also being victimised by delayed / non-payment of salaries. Instead of paying on the last day of the month as per company rules, their July salary was paid on 20 August and August and September salaries are due till filing this news.

In protest, the MTNL workers and officers together decided to hold candle light march from India Gate to Prime Minister’s office in Delhi and from Azad Maidan to Governor’s House in Mumbai simultaneously on 16 October.

Reacting to the proposed protest, the management issued letters to the union / association promising to pay August salary before 25 October and appealing to withdraw the proposed agitation. Following the management’s letter, the candle light marches have been deferred.

Financial Express said, *“MTNL and BSNL have termed it as a bit strange as the Union government last week announced a 5% DA hike for central government employees that will cost the exchequer Rs.16,000 a year on a recurring basis but no relief was extended to these two central PSUs.”* (22/10/2019)

Victory for BSNL – MTNL Employees

Government Conceded Major Demands

It is big victory of BSNL employees after their prolong struggle when the Union Cabinet on Wednesday, the 23 October, announced revival package for BSNL conceding to some major demands of BSNL Employees Union, the biggest union of the employees and of All Unions and Association of BSNL (AUAB), the united forum of all BSNL workers and officers organisations.

In a press conference, after the Cabinet decision, the Union Communication Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had to admit that the "*Existence of BSNL is in strategic interest of the nation,"*

The demands of the employees, which have been conceded by the Union government, include allotment of 4G spectrum to BSNL and MTNL. The 4G spectrum will be allotted within a month. The funding for spectrum allocation will be in lieu of equity shares of BSNL and preferential shares of MTNL.

The government also decided monetisation of assets of BSNL and MTNL to raise Rs.37,500 crores in 3 years. The assets include land and buildings.

In addition, both the PSEs have been allowed to raise fund through long term bonds of Rs.15,000 crores with government's guarantee.

The Government of India did not provide any fund as immediate relief to meet due salaries of permanent and contract workers and ensuring timely payments in future.

In the press conference, however, the Union Communication Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad highlighted VRS scheme for the employees above 50 years of age at GoI's ex-gratia allotment of Rs.17,169 crores. In any case, as the former government employees before corporatisation, these employees' pension, gratuity and other benefits are the government's responsibility.

The Cabinet also approved in principle the merger of BSNL and MTNL. (24/10/2019)

In Muthoot Finance

52 Days Workers Strike Ends in Victory

52 days indefinite strike of the employees of Muthoot Finance Company in Kerala ended in victory on 10 October, 2019 when management signed a settlement with the CITU-affiliated union – the Non-banking & Private Finance Employees Association – following discussion in presence of an advocate commission, appointed by the Kerala High Court.

Strike notice was served, in advance, demanding proper wage structure; end of victimisation including transfers and harassment of the union functionaries; for a registered standing order incorporating transfer policy and other conditions of service etc.

As pre-strike conciliation before the state labour commissioner failed, the indefinite strike began on 20 August. Efforts for conciliation by the state labour minister also failed due to adamant attitude of the management. The indefinite strike by 1800 employees paralysed functioning in the company's 611 branches and 11 regional offices across Kerala.

The company's managing director George Alexander Muthoot arrogantly stated that he would not recognise any union / union activities in the company and threatened closure of the company's branches in Kerala. Prompted by the management, this was followed by media tirade against the strike, the union and CITU spreading canard and falsehood that the strike was led by the vested interest, there was no strike earlier in the company, only minority employees were on strike and that the strike was associated with violence by the strikers etc.

In a press conference on 30 August, CITU state general secretary Elamaram Kareem, MP strongly gave point by point rebuttal to media trial against the strike, the union and CITU. "Muthoot Finance's management is totally against its employees' right of union under Indian law," Kareem said. On one hand, the management is campaigning that the union represents 'minority', on the other hand, it has declined the proposal of conducting referendum through secret ballot which was even recommended by the Kerala High Court when the management approached it a week before, he added. Kareem alleged that the management had been resorting to retaliatory actions against the employees since the trade union was formed in the company. Many employees had been transferred outside the State, while some were threatened with dismissal. Some had been denied their rightful benefits. The management refused to acknowledge the earlier settlement.

On 3 September, the union staged demonstration and held rally in front of company's head office at Ernakulum. Some of the management-hired people, mostly non-employees, had also gathered and threatened the striking employees.

The employees formed a union in 2016. The management immediately resorted to victimisation of union functionaries by transferring 125 and suspending 40 others of them which forced the newly formed union to resort to indefinite strike. After 17 days strike an agreement was arrived at in presence of the state labour minister.

The company does not have any pay structure for the employees. The wage is 'performance' related, low and arbitrary.

Solidarity Movement

CITU Centre: On 2 October, CITU all India centre issued statement condemning the management of the company for their anti-workers stance denying employees their right of trade union including collective bargaining; reasonable service conditions; failing to register a standing order, a statutory requirement; resorting to large scale victimisations and refusal to implement earlier agreement. All efforts to settle the industrial disputes through conciliation by the labour commissioner and intervention by the state labour minister also failed.

CITU called upon the working class all over the country to stand in solidarity with the struggling employees of the Muthoot Finance and called upon its state committees and unions to stage solidarity demonstrations across the country.

Telangana: CITU Telangana state committee staged demonstrations on 30 September before 16 Muthoot Finance offices in 13 districts; thousands of handbills were distributed. In one district a round table meeting was held. In all districts pamphlet were distributed among the employees in Muthoot branches.

Tamilnadu: CITU Tamilnadu state committee staged demonstrations in front of Muthoot offices in Tirupur, Kanyakumari, Coimbatore and Theni districts and submitted memoranda. The Chennai South and Chennai North committees sent memoranda to the company's head office. CITU State committee has also sent protest letter to the head office of the company.

The Settlement

UPDATED: AUGUST 30, 2019 23:37Ultimately, the strike ended with a settlement on 10 October management acceding to recognition of the union and collective bargaining right of the workers through it.

It was agreed that, in consultation with the High Court, the management will implement minimum wages notification of the Kerala government which will ensure employees wage hike. Each employee will get an ad hoc wage increase of Rs.500 effective October, 2019 as interim relief.

Accepting a wage structure, the rate of annual increment is fixed at 25% retrospectively effective from 1 April, 2019. Statutory bonus for 2018-19 financial will be paid immediately.

With the help of the state labour department, a certified standing order will be made and registered and the same will be implemented by the management soon. Till that time, management would follow Kerala state model standing order and management will regularize probationary period, promotion and retirement benefits of the employees.

All dismissals and suspension orders will be revoked by the management. The management has also assured that no disciplinary action would be initiated against those who participated in the strike.

Darjeeling Hills Tea Gardens; Workers Achieved 20% Bonus

Just before this festive season beginning in early October, the tripartite meeting, attended by the state labour minister, failed on demand of 20% bonus of tea garden workers in Darjeeling Hills.

Led by the United Forum of tea garden workers unions in Darjeeling Hills and pursuing their demand of 20% bonus, 80,000 workers in all 87 tea gardens in the Hills resorted to en mass leave on 4 October. That day, along with tea gardens' shutdowns; in Darjeeling town and adjoining areas shops downed their shutters and roads were deserted; Darjeeling observed a 12 hours bandh that day in this tourist season.

The unions' leaders resorted to 32 hours hunger strike in Darjeeling town. GJM leader warned fast unto death. Tea garden workers in Doors and Tarai region in West Bengal staged demonstrations in solidarity.

The state labour minister advanced the date of scheduled tripartite meeting from 17 October to 11 October. *"Considering the gravity of the situation and emergent nature of the situation a meeting with the representatives of both the parties is called this day on 11.10.2019,"* the tripartite meeting minutes recorded.

Ultimately, after 3 hours long discussion, *"The West Bengal government and the Tea Planters' Association of Darjeeling hills on Friday agreed to the demand of tea garden workers across 87 gardens in the Darjeeling hills for a 20% bonus"*, reported *The Hindu* newspaper. It was agreed that 20% bonus will be paid in two installments - 60% within 10 days and the date payment of rest 40% will be decided in the tripartite meeting in November, 2019. However, CITU affiliated Darjeeling District Chiakaman Mazdoor Union leader Saman Pathak, ex-MP pointed out that as per law bonus to tea garden workers has to be paid within 15 December, 2019. (19/10/2019)

After Three & Half Decades Minimum Wage Notified in INDCOSERVE

After the intervention, persuasion and struggle by the workers, led by Tamilnadu Plantation Workers Coordination Committee and CITU state committee, the Government of Tamilnadu notified minimum wages on 14 August, 2019 for the workers in INDCOSERVE (Tamilnadu Small Tea Growers' Industrial Cooperative Tea Factories' Federation Limited), the largest tea co-operative federation in India.

There are 16 factories, called as 'bought leaf tea' factories, under INDCOSERVE in Nilgiris district of Tamilnadu. 1450 workers in these factories, manufacturing tea from raw tea leaf, are being deprived of the minimum wages for decades. Last minimum wage for them was notified in 1983 at Rs.36 as basic against which the small and tiny tea growers brought a stay from the High Court. Since 2005, the unions and the management had entered into agreement to pay meagre interim allowances. Even bonus was on that basis. Such a situation continued till 2016.

Now after the notification of the minimum wage as basic plus DA will be around Rs.330 per day for the workers in the bought leaf factories.

Victory of IT sector Employees in MPS Ltd

Long drawn struggle of the employees of the IT sector company MPS Ltd in Bangalore since February 2018 ended in a victory when a tripartite settlement was signed by the management of this multinational company and the Karnataka State IT/ITeS Employees Union (KITU), representing the company's employees, in presence of the DLC in Bangalore on 4 October, 2019.

Earlier, bilateral discussion was held between the management, represented by the company's chief financial manager and company's secretary Suneet Malhotra and chief operational officer and its Bangalore unit head Srinivasa Rao; and KITU represented by its president VJK Nair, general secretary Sooraj Nidiyanga and its MPS unit office bearers.

As per the settlement, the management has withdrawn transfer orders of 207 employees from Bangalore to Dehradun; pending appraisal will be given to all employees with arrears from April 2018; irregularities in the salary slip and bonus calculation will be corrected; all four terminated employees including KITU MPS unit president M. L. Sridhara will be reinstated.

The employees struggle in the company began in February 2018 against the management's decision to transfer 207 employees to Dehradun. The company started harassing its employees individually to accept transfer or face dismissal. They were being forced to submit resignation against one month's notice pay. The management resorted to dismissals on refusal to resign. Several senior employees having 20-25 years service were under intimidation and constant pressure by the management.

KITU raised an industrial dispute against victimisations. On 18 February 2018 first general body meeting of MPS unit of KITU was held, a committee was constituted and an industrial dispute was raised against victimisations including M. L. Sridhara, the newly elected president of MPS unit of KITU.

During pendency of the dispute in the conciliation, in violation of the provision of I. D. Act, the management terminated the services of 10 more KITU members including MPS unit general secretary secretary Honnesh Gowda. Immediately hundreds of employees came out staging candle light protest demonstration in front the company's office. Next day, on 18 September 2019, union filed a complaint petition with the DLC.

As advised by the DLC, bilateral discussion between the management and union began in September. After several bilateral meetings and conciliation sittings, the management finally agreed on the demands of the union and a settlement was signed and the terminated employees were reinstated.

KITU congratulated the employees of MPS Ltd for this victory. (20/10/2019)

NOTICE

17 October 2019

- 16th Conference of the CITU will be held on 23-27 January 2020 at Chennai, Tamil Nadu to transact the following agenda:
- (1) Condolence Resolution; (2) Presidential Address; (3) Report of the General Secretary; (4) Statement of Accounts for the years 2016, 17, 18; (5) Commission discussion on four subjects and reports thereon; (6) Resolutions; (7) Election of Office Bearers, General Council and Working Committee; (8) Any other issue with the permission of the Chair.
- As decided by the Hassan meeting of the CITU General Council, the delegation for the 16th Conference shall be based on the fully paid membership of CITU for the year 2018.
- The total number of delegates to the conference, including the members of the CITU Secretariat, delegates from Centre and fraternal delegates, shall be 2000, the ratio being one delegate per every 3050 members.
- Rs 1500 per delegate is payable as delegate fees.
- The proportion of women in the state delegation has to be equal to the proportion of women membership of CITU in the state and IN NO CASE LESS THAN 25% OF THE TOTAL STATE DELEGATION. If an elected woman delegate is not able to attend the conference, she should be replaced only by a woman and not by a male delegate.
- Serving workers, young workers, SC/ST and minorities should be given adequate representation in the delegation.

Note

1. All state committees are requested to ensure that to and fro journey tickets for the delegates are booked well in advance, as early as possible, and inform their arrival details to the Reception Committee.
2. The Tamil Nadu state committee of CITU has expressed its inability to make any arrangements for family members wishing to accompany delegates. At best, the state committee may help getting accommodation in hotels on payment for the family members accompanying the delegates provided they are informed well in advance.

Address of the Reception Committee

Tamil Nadu State Committee of CITU A. Nallasivam Ninaivagam, 13, Mosque Street, Chepauk, Chennai – 600 005, Phone:044-28410259, Fax: 044-28511975 **E mail:** citutn@gmail.com	**Contact Numbers** G Sukumaran, General Secretary - 9443569130 A Soundararajan, President – 9841748076 V. Kumar, Asst. Gen. Secy, - 9840819206 Thiruchelvan, Asst.Gen. Secy.- 9444577036 K. C. Gopikumar, Secretary - 9443091730

TAPAN SEN
General Secretary

Workers Big Struggles

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation
Unprecedented Strike; Unprecedented Response

The Strike and Government's Repression

"*In a sensational move, the Telangana government on Sunday announced dismissal of 48,000-odd employees and workers of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) from service, after they launched an indefinite strike demanding solution to their long-pending problems,*" reported *Hindustan Times* (HT) from Hyderabad on 6 October, 2019. *"Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, who held a high-level meeting of officials of the transport department late Sunday evening, announced that the RTC now had only 1,200 employees, including those who did not join the strike and others who returned to their duties before 6 pm on Saturday, a deadline fixed by the government for the unions to call off their strike."*

The Telangana chief minister, who often creates 'sensational news', himself inadvertently confirmed the wide magnitude of the united strike of TSRCTC workers. Out of total 49,190 workers, 48,000 plus workers are on strike at the call of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of Telangana SRTC Employees and Workers' Unions since 5 October early morning. From the agitated reaction of the chief minister, the serious impact of the strike becomes obvious. Two striking workers committed suicide and four more workers attempted when they heard chief minister's announcement about their dismissals from job.

The striking unions are demanding merger of TSRTC with the state government as was done in the neighbouring state Andhra Pradesh, where they are being treated as government employees with enhanced retirement age of 60 years and other benefits and budgetary provision for the RTC. They are also demanding revision of their salaries pending since April 2017, new recruitment to reduce workload etc. The government is yet to clear dues of Rs.2,400 to TSRTC and failed to keep the promise of reducing tax on diesel to reduce the financial burden of the corporation, said the president of JAC.

The chief minister knows that such oral summery dismissals of TSRTC workers for joining the strike are illegal. In the same vein another illegal announcement was made by the chief minister that the government would start new recruitment to replace the 'dismissed' workers who would be asked to give an undertaking that "*they would not join any employees' unions,*" HT quoted. He also said that private bus operators would be brought into the TSRTC to work as a public-private partnership. "*Hereafter, half of the RTC fleet would be private buses*."

In Solidarity

In a statement on 7 October, CITU strongly condemned such authoritarian attitude of the chief minister and repressive measures adopted by the government and demanded to revoke the decision of mass dismissals of the workers and hold discussion with the striking unions for settling their legitimate demands.

The government blamed the workers for TSRTC losses and has gone all out to suppress the workers legitimate demands, democratic and trade union rights and adopted repressive and authoritarian measures to break the strike including arrests of the joint convener of JAC, general secretary of Telangana Staff & Workers Federation (CITU) and CITU state office bearer V. S. Rao and other two joint conveners of JAC.

RTC's losses were mainly because of government's failure to reimburse the corporation's revenue losses due to imposition of various governmental subsidies on the RTC; increasing diesel prices through central and state government's increasing taxes; imposition of GST, shared by the central and state government, etc. The JAC since many months has been raising the issues with the state government. As the government failed to respond, the JAC gave the strike notice on 6 September and was compelled to go on strike because of the negligent attitude of the TRS state government, CITU statement said.

CITU called upon its state committees, transport sector unions and workers of the country to stand in solidarity with the striking TSRTC workers and resort to solidarity actions.

Same day, on 7 October, CITU's All India Road Transport Workers Federation (AIRTWF) issued statement and its general secretary and CITU national secretary K. K. Divakaran along with its another office bearer Anabalagan rushed to Hyderabad to stand by the side of the striking workers. They visited the families of the RTC workers who committed suicide. AIRTWF statement condemned the Telangana government for adopting repressive measures, arrests of the unions' leaders, demolishing the RTC for privatisation.

CITU national vice president A. K. Padmanabhan personally went to Hyderabad on 18 October, met the striking unions' leaders, conveyed CITU's support and addressed press conference with JAC leaders

CPI(M) Central Committee has extended full support to TSRTC strike, condemned TRS government's repressive actions and extended support to statewide Bandh in support of the strike, CPI(M)'s Polit Bureau member B. V. Raghavulu informed in the press conference, reported UNI.

All out repressive action by Telangana government requires all out support and solidarity with striking TSRTC workers by all democratic sections. On 12 October, an all-party meeting with JAC, attended by CPI(M), CPI, Congress, BJP, Telangana Jana Samithi and TDP leaders; condemned TRS government's actions against RTC workers and decided several agitational programmes including mass lunch on roads by cooking food there on 13 October; sit-in protest and public meetings in front of the bus depots on 14 October; Rasta Roko and forming human chains on 15 October; and Telangana Bandh on 19 October.

Besides political parties, state government employees, trade unions, sections of advocates and student unions have extended their support to strike and the Bandh.

Several CITU state committees including in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Punjab, Haryana, Assam and others oraganised programmes for solidarity with TSRTC by holding rallies, dharna, demonstrations, public meeting etc.

Telangana Bandh

The dawn-to-dusk state Bandh called by unions of TSRTC employees on Saturday has paralysed life in the state capital. According to reports from Telangana districts such as Warangal, Karimnagar and Medak, normal life was severely affected due to the shutdown. There were no major reports of violence from anywhere in the region in the morning, reported *The Times of India*.

The Bandh received wide support from various sections of the people including students, employees and others.

The 12-hour Bandh began at 5 am amid heightened security at most bus depots. At the Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station, the biggest bus station in Hyderabad, no buses were running to any destination in Telangana and neighbouring states.

About 50,000 Ola and Uber cab drivers joined the strike with their own set of demands that include a better share in fares and establishment of a Cab Drivers' Welfare Board, reported *BusinessLine*.

In view of the TSRTC strike and state Bandh, the Government declared closure of schools and colleges till Monday, 21 October.

The police also took about 40 union leaders and supporters into preventive custody in the early morning. Several of the political leaders and activists were arrested while staging dharna and picketing across the state. Tension prevailed after police detained Telangana Jana Samithi president Prof. M. Kodandaram and TDP leaders and others arrested at Jubilee Bus Stand (JBS) while participating in the protest, media report said.

High Court's Intervention

On 16 October, the High Court has asked the state government and union leaders to hold talks and submit a report based on it on 28 October.

The government's lawyer pleaded that negotiation is not possible, to which the court responded that since 50% of the 45 demands do not have a financial implication, the government cannot refuse to listen to them and negotiate.

The state government was also directed to pay salaries for September to all the 49,190 employees by October 21. (21/10/2019)

Resistance to Privatisation
DSP Workers Resist Entry of Foreign Consultants

On Monday, 21 October, Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP) reverberated with slogan *'Watson go back'*. The workers, permanent and contract and irrespective of their affiliation, rushed from different sections of the plant to the entrance of the administrative building of NSPCL and physically prevented entry of three representatives of UK based consultancy firm Wills Tower Watson. Ultimately, the foreign firm's inspectors had to leave DSP.

Watson company was deputed for assessment of National SAIL Power Corporation Ltd (NSPCL) - a fifty : fifty joint public sector company of SAIL and NTPC for captive power plants in SAIL's steel plants at Durgapur, Rourkela and Bhilai. There has been a clandestine move of the government privatise NSPCL and for that purpose this UK based consultancy company was appointed. A confidential circular of the chairman of NSPCL indicate this exercise as a first step of privatisation and not to remain confined within SAIL. (23/10/2019)

Bank Employees Strike Against Bank-Mergers

Called by two major bank unions – AIBEA and BEFI - employees of public and private sector banks were on 24-hours strike on 22 October across the India. It was supported by bank officers' association - AIBOC. *Indian Express* (23.10.2019) reported, "Banking operations across India were partially hit on Tuesday as 4 lakh employees of public sector banks, a few old generation private and foreign banks went on a one-day strike to protest the Centre's merger plan for PSBs."

The strike was total especially in Andhra Bank, Allahabad Bank, Corporation Bank, Syndicate Bank, Oriental bank of Commerce and United Bank of India.

The strike was in protest against the proposed mergers of 10 nationalised banks into 4 and closing 6 banks. Besides this, the strike was also against the on-going banking reforms and high penalty and service charges for public customers and the non-recovery of large bad debts.

The strike largely impacted cash deposits and withdrawals at the counter and cheque clearances.

CITU and all other central trade unions, except BMS, in their joint statement extended support and solidarity to strike and castigated the government for deliberately diverting attention from the government's failure to recover corporate bad loans and huge amounts being written off, haircuts and concessions to the problems arising out of the mergers.

CITU in a separate statement congratulated the striking bank employees for their overwhelming response to the call of strike to resist the anti-people and anti-national moves of the BJP government at the Centre.

BJP government's decision of banks mergers is against the nation's interests and its economy. This disastrous exercise is meant for drastically squeezing the public sector banks' operational areas through inevitable closure of huge number of bank-branches, severely affecting employment and also affecting the spread-over and availability of banking services to common people particularly in comparatively remote areas, besides further weakening the concerned PSBs. As a result, the private sector banks, including foreign banks, will get more open field for their business in the urban areas; and the vast rural areas will be left virtually without any banking services.

Also the government's own scheme of direct benefit transfer (DBT) on various welfare measures in rural areas is destined to get squeezed and infructuous; it will virtually deprive the poor of their legitimate benefits owing to non-availability and/or decline of the bank branches in the rural areas.

Previous experience shows that after merger of 5 Associate Banks with SBI, more than 2000 branches had been closed and the workers strength in 2 years have come down by 10,000. Merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with the Bank of Baroda is going to shut down around 800 more branches. A substantial section of those closed / going-to-be-closed branches are in the rural areas, where the private banks never tread.

On the other hand, the government is legitimizing pilferage of bank money by the defaulter corporates through Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code Procedure, forcing the public sector banks to sacrifice substantial portion their legitimate dues just to favour the defaulters. The government is actually engaged in destruction of the of the country's financial service network which got widely expanded post nationalization of banks and insurance sector, CITU said.

In a separate statement BEFI said that confronting serious economic crisis, Modi government has embarked on dangerous path of weakening and destroying the public sector banks. It has already dealt deadly blows through unprecedented loot of public money by the corporates through resolution mechanisms instituted by it. Now, the government has resorted to mindless mergers of the PSBs to facilitate further plunder of its resources.

To circumvent banking norms and credit at higher rates of interest up to 24%, the government is forcing PSBs to tie-up and co-originate loans through the NBFCs. This is a dangerous move to further pauperise the weaker section of the society and a move to cut the reach of the PSBs for financial inclusion. At a time when economic activity has slowed to a trickle, it is a high-risk idea to push bank credit to vulnerable sectors and potentially weaken the PSBs. (24/10/2019)

- R. Karumalaiyan

Protests against BPCL's Privatisation Move

India's national asset, the 2nd largest public sector oil company, ranked 275th in the world's biggest corporations in the *Fortune* list in 2019 and over Rs.7000 crores of annual profit in 2019, the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) is for sale.

BPCL has four oil refineries in Mumbai, Numuligarh in Assam, Kochi in Kerala and Bina in Madhya Pradesh; and 15,054 petrol pumps and 6004 LPG service centres. Barmah-Shell company was nationalised in 1976 and became BPCL.

To meet next year's budget deficit, Modi-2 government is moving with speed to mop up Rs.60,000 crores from the sale of BPCL. Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), under the ministry of finance, has already issued advertisement for tender to be submitted within 30 October and opening tender on 4 November. Petroleum companies like Aramco of Soudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company have shown interest to purchase BPCL. Modi-crony Ambani's Reliance Petroleum Ltd obviously will be the prime choice. *(Inputs: Ganashakti)*

Workers Protests

Assam: Protesting against BPCL's Numuligarh refinery's privatisation move and against privatisation attempt of BPCL and other PSUs; at the joint call of the state units of central trade unions in Assam; workers of oil refineries and petroleum transport began a march from Laksminath Bejbarua Crossing to district administration office in state capital Guwahati on 15 October morning.

Police erected several barricades on the road to stop the workers march. Workers broke police cordons several times and staged a sit-in and held public meeting. During the meeting, suddenly police and CRF used force to break the meeting and arrested and put in the detention over 200 workers and leaders including CITU state general secretary

Tapan Sarma, noth east oil workers coordination committee convener Biren Kalita, state general secretaries of AITUC Fanidhar Das and of HMS Manoranjan Sarkar, UTUC secretary Dinesh Kalita, AICCTU secretary Pankaj Das and several unions' and national federations' leaders of Assam.

Tamilnadu: Dharna was staged on 19 October in front of BPCL LPG bottling plant at Gummidipundi in Thiruvallur district in TaminInadu by the workers, including all permanent, contract, tanker lorry drivers and dealers jointly under the banner of Tamilnadu Petroleum & Gas Workers Union (CITU) led by its general secretary K. Vijayan.

Kerala: An all trade unions indefinite day-long dharna is being staged in front of BPCL Kochi refinery since 15 October which was inaugurated by veteran CITU leader K.N. Ravindranath and addressed by CITU leaders K. Chandran Pillai and K.N. Gopinath and other leaders.

All oil trade unions are going to meet in Mumbai soon to decide about countrywide united protest actions including strike against BPCL's privatisation. (23/10/2019)

Indefinite Strike by HAL Workers

19,600 workers of government-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), under the Ministry of Defence, are on indefinite strike in all its locations since 14 October, 2019 including its headquarter in Bangalore and in several units, spread over in 6 states, including Bangalore in Karnataka; Nasik in Maharashtra; Korwa, Kanpur and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh; Koraput in Odisha; Hyderabad in Telangana and Kasaragod in Kerala.

HAL designs, develops, manufactures, repairs and overhauls aircrafts, helicopters, engines, and their accessories. HAL serves all three Indian armed forces, the Border Security Force, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), and the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO).

It is the longest ever strike in the company's history which is led by All India HAL Trade Unions Coordination Committee demanding a fair wage revision effective from January 1, 2017 among other issues. The wage revision is being delayed even after 33 months. The unions allege that while other public service undertakings have revised wages in 2017, HAL is the only PSU that has been left out by the government.

This is despite the fact that the "financial condition of the company, at present, is healthy" agreed by the management. In financial year 2019, HAL recorded a turnover of Rs19,400 crore, an increase of 15% in profit to Rs.2282, a record due to hard and dedicated work of the employees of the enterprise.

The unions alleged that workers are being discriminated. While executives have been given 15% fitment and 35% perks benefits, the workers have been offered only 11% fitment and 22% perks. The unions demand parity.

The Karnataka state committee of CITU in a statement on 14 October said that after denial of MMRCA manufacturing by HAL and in the background of Rafale deal for readymade aircrafts and media campaign of HAL's incapability; it is now a deliberate attempt to put HAL in poor light projecting deteriorating industrial relation.

The unions already gave sufficient warning before the indefinite strike which was ignored by the management and the government. Earlier, the workers resorted to only demonstrative programmes. This was followed by a token strike. A delegation of AIHALTUCC met the defence minister on 27 July 2019. But, there was no positive response from the management and the government. The, workers were forced to resort to indefinite strike.

However, after Karnataka High Court's interim order the HAL unions called off the strike on 23 October and at Nasik on 24 October. (24/10/2019)

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Road Transport

Merger of APSRTC with State Government

K. K. Divakarn

Andhra Pradesh government of YSRCP, in its very first cabinet meeting, had decided to merge Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) directly under its department.

At a time, when the present policies of the governments are to withdraw government from all its responsibilities, promoting privatisation and disinvestment of PSUs and outsourcing; this decision of AP government is positive.

The APSRTC workers are jubilant. It has created positive impact and discussion among the workers of other STUs is taking place.

Why this demand has come to the fore

APSRTC is in serious financial crisis and the workers were made the victims of the crisis. Reduction of staff, increasing workloads, harassment on workers, nonpayment of terminal benefits at the time of retirement, utilising the workers money recovered towards co-operative society, PF etc. RTC workers' wages are far below the wages of government employees.

What are reasons for the financial crisis

Nowhere in the world, except in India, public transport is considered as a source of revenue to the exchequer. Motor Vehicle Tax is being levied in a big way. In some states, in addition to the M. V. Tax, passenger tax is also levied. Secondly, excise duty on vehicles, sales tax on spares and diesel are levied. Third is the illegal operation of buses by private operators on nationalised routes. The private operators, while obtaining contract carriage permit, are also operating as stage carriages violating the permit rules. Forth is that, the STUs are compelled to operate in the interior village and hilly region routes as a part of social responsibility of the government. These services are very low earning routes. APSRTC is also formed under the provisions of RTC Act 1950. As per RTC Act, the central and state governments have to provide capital contribution at the ratio of 1:2. But from 1988 onwards, not even a single rupee is given both by the centre and state governments. All these factors together had thrown APSRTC and other STUs into crisis.

Background of enactment of RTC Act 1950

After the Second World War several committees were formed (1943) to study how to reconstruct the damaged world. The sub-committee on transport recommended as "regular, speedy and comfortable motor service, enforcement of maintenance and other safety measures, prevention of flooding of roads by transport concerns, resulting in cut-throat competition and urged that in order to have civilised facilities for travel, commensurate with density of the traffic and service which that traffic can support, the condition requisite must invariably result in the replacement of small owners by large companies.

The Post War Reconstruction Committee's recommendation was further supported by the Transport Advisory Council in 1945 and also by the Post War Policy Committee on Transport.

These recommendations forced several state governments to use compulsion and persuasion to organise individual operators into bigger units.

Though further attempts were made to bring the warring bus operators into groups of Co-operatives, it did not succeed because of conflicting persuasions of the operators. At the time of independence this was the situation in India.

Having failed in all attempts to organise small operators into bigger units, the Government had enacted “Road Transport Corporations Act 1950” enabling the state governments to form Road Transport Corporations in the Public Sector. The RTC Act thus enabled the State intervention in the cause of making bus transport an integral part of social and economic infrastructure.

Since mobility is an intrinsic part of quality of life, transport as a public facility becomes a matter of State Policy not only in India but in the entire world. The aim of the founding fathers of public bus services was to meet the social obligations by providing affordable, safe and reliable bus service in urban and rural areas.

With this concept of social obligation and to provide bus services to the public, the State Road Transport Corporations were formed in almost all the states and they served the public well and also contributed in a big way for the development of the states. Before formation of APSRTC on11-01-1958, it was under the state government department.

Effect of neo liberal policies

Despite of all the above facts, in the early 1990s Dr. Ora, Deputy Advisor, Planning Commission issued the following directions to the states;

1) There should be no expansion of STUs;

2) They should gradually make room for private sector except in cases where private sector is unlikely to come;

3) Operational efficiency of STUs must improve.

This has laid the foundation for the destruction of the STUs in the country which led to closure of RTCs in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. In Odisha and Bihar for name sake some buses are under the STUs. All other STUs are in serious crisis.

What is happening when it is under Government

Till date, in some states and union territories, the transport is under the government. They are Andaman Nicobar, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Haryana, Nagaland, Sikkim and Punjab.

Haryana: In Haryana there are 3843 buses at present. But in 2009 there were 4160 buses. That means when the population and the travel needs of the public are going up, there is a shortfall of 317 buses. The government is very much serious either to give permits to private operators or to take private buses on hire on the pretext that Haryana Roadways is not able to fulfill the travel needs of the public and there is no money to purchase new buses by Haryana Roadways. Payment of bonus to the workers is pending for the last 4 years. Harassment and punishments on the workers are comparatively higher than the Government employees.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands: There are only 300 buses on road and around 100 buses are off the road. The people are left to the mercy of the private operators. The workers are facing victimisation and harassment by the authorities violating the service rules. Even within the limited number of employees, there are casual/contract employees who are paid very low wages. The other small north eastern states are also not well. Mainly the public are left to the mercy of the private operators.

There are some urban/municipal transport corporations like in Ahmadabad, Jaipur, Sholapur, Pimpri etc. In Mumbai, it is Bombay Electrical Supply and Transport. All these are gradually weakened and made ineffective and paved the way for private operators.

What is the Answer

The answer is to provide safe, economic, affordable and well-coordinated transport to the public. It should be the social responsibility of the government. The need of the hour is to have a reversal of the policy of the government towards the public and the nation as a whole.

Solution

Merger of APSRTC or any other STU is a political decision. After the merger naturally the existing debts and liabilities shall vest with the government. The common people and workers expect that there will be expansion of fleet strength under the government to cope up the growing need of travelling public to ensure quality of service. For this financial assistance will be provided through budget for the purchase of new buses both for replacement and augmentation.

The Transport workers deserve higher wages than the government employees keeping in view the high risk and work in all extreme weather conditions. The salary and pension shall be revised on par with the state government employees immediately as a first step. The service conditions shall be improved so as to create a positive environment. If merger takes place, the benefits enjoyed by the government employees are to be extended to the transport workers and the other additional benefits, already being enjoyed by the transport workers, shall be continued.

STUs or after merger with government department shall be allowed to operate cargo/ goods transport. For this purpose, without investing huge capital, the old aged buses can be utilised duly making some changes. The state and central governments shall extend support and co-operation duly making arrangements to transport the public distribution items and other government material. This will help in a big way to generate additional revenue.

(Divakaran is AIRTWF general secretary)

Private Security

Private Service Industry & the Workers

Debanjan Chakrabarti

Industry Profile

About Private Security Industry: Rapidly increasing market of Private Security Industry (PSI) in India was estimated to be Rs.57,000 crore in 2016 increasing to Rs.99,000 crore in 2020 and to Rs.1.5 lakh crore by 2022 employing around 89 Lakh persons in 2018, one of the largest employments and more than the combined strength of the army, navy and air force. They are employed by more than 22,000 Private Security Agencies (PSAs) mostly managed and run by ex-servicemen as their resettlement projects. There are 8 types of private security jobs - Unarmed Security Guards, Armed Security Guards, Security Supervisors, CCTV Supervisors, Security Officers, Personal Security Officers, Assignment Managers and Investigators.

PSI has broadly two major segments- Security Services Industry (SSI) and allied services. A major part of SSI is the Manned Guarding followed by Cash and Electronic Security.

Manned Guarding: Manned guarding accounts for nearly 75% of the SSI; followed by cash services management and electronic security services having nearly 20%-25% share. Key users of manned guarding services are IT / ITES, retail, commercial and manufacturing. While 41% of the manned guarding services are utilized in the commercial sector, 39% are engaged in the residential sector.

Cash Management Services: The cash management services include - ATM network of banks - movement of cash and high value items within bank's branch network - cash pick-up and delivery for large corporate's retails outlets etc. There are 7-8 major players controlling 75%-80% of the market.

Regulations: PSAs are governed by Private Security Agencies Regulation Act (PASRA) 2005, Arms Act 1959 and FDI policy. For the workers among the security personnel labour laws apply including Minimum Wages Act, Employees Provident Fund Act, ESI Act 1948, Bonus Act, Gratuity Act etc.

Impact of GST: GST has an adverse impact on this industry. In this GST regime, PSAs were liable to pay Service Tax @ 15% on the business entities. However, on GST implementation liability to pay GST is @ 18% without any exemption.

Major PSAs: G4S (1.3 Lakh employees); TOPS (1.3 Lakh); SIS (96,000), Peregrine (55,000) and Securitas (35,000). 5 companies together generate revenue of Rs.2212 Crore.

Conditions of Security Workers

At several places like in banks, central and state PSUs the security guards enjoy trade union rights and earn much more than minimum wage and are covered by EPF, ESI, Gratuity, Bonus, Workmen Compensation etc.

But, despite huge number in the private security industry, the conditions of the workers, both men and women, are deplorable – (i) longer working hours without overtime payment, (ii) wages less than the notified minimum wages, (iii) deprived of social security coverage of EPF, ESI and Gratuity Acts etc.

Working Hours: Almost compulsorily, the working hours are 10-12 hours / day, without any overtime payment.

Minimum Wage: 60%–70% workers are deprived of the notified minimum wages. In rural and semi-urban areas the PSAs pay wages to security guards @ Rs.2500 - Rs.4000 per month i.e. only Rs.83 - Rs.133 per day.

As on 1 January 2019, the state governments' notified minimum wages, for the unarmed security guards, ranges Rs.267 - Rs330 / day.

The rate of central government notified minimum wage, as on 1 January 2019, area-wise, ranges Rs.527 – Rs.697 / day for the unarmed and Rs.617 – Rs.738 / day for the armed security guards.

Social Security: Most of the workers are not covered by EPF Act. Even those, who are covered, PF deduction is made only from the basic pay, excluding the DA, as practiced by most of the multinational PSAs.

Only few PSAs covered their employees under the ESI Act. Some are providing some medical allowance. But, vast majority, numbering Lakhs of security guards, are kept outside the purview of the ESI Act.

Benefits of the Gratuity Act 1972 are not being extended to maximum number of workers thus depriving them of even meager statutory retirement benefits.

Unionisation of the Workers

It is much delayed initiative of the trade unions in organising the private security workers. Today, hardly 5% of this vast number of workers is unionized and accrued some statutory benefits as mentioned above.

However, there is stiff resistance by the security agencies to any attempt to form union or any trade union activities. To suppress the formation of a union or organising union activities, the managements resort to mass retrenchment; dismissals and transfers of union functionaries and activists.

(Debanjan Chakrabarti is a CITU West Bengal state secretary and vice president of West Bengal Security Workers Federation)

Security Drivers Staged Demonstration at Noida

Led by CITU district president Gangeshwar Datta Sharma and general secretary Ramsagar, 129 drivers of police PCR vans in Noida staged demonstration under the banner of CITU before the deputy labour commissioner on 8 August and met the district magistrate in deputation next day.

These workers were recruited by M/S Surakhsa Force Pvt. Ltd and M/S Security Solution and Man Power Services as drivers for the police PCR vans to work at Noida and in Noida Industrial Area under Noida Industrial Development Authority.

When they were not paid wages since January 2019, they collective met these private security agencies on 26 June for 6 months due wages and other benefits under labour laws. They were immediately removed from services by these security agencies. Thereafter, they collectively moved from pillar post meeting labour officials and district administrative officers and others without any relief. Then they approached CITU and CITU held this demonstration and are organising these workers in Union.

Modi Government's Economic Impropriety

Tapan Sen

CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen in a statement on 29 August denounced Modi government's executive decision of CPSEs' more disinvestment and FDI liberalisation. These will further erode country's indigenous capability and economic sovereignty.

"During the span of last one week or so the BJP Government at the Centre has taken one after another destructive measures weakening further the foundation of the national economy which is already under severe crisis owing to same destructive and pro-imperialist policies."

The Government forcibly transferred Rs.1.76 lakh crore from RBI kitty of reserve to itself to meet its revenue expenditure gap, which is economically imprudent besides being an onslaught on the autonomy of the institution through the obliging team of bureaucrats put at the helm of RBI Board.

Second, while lamenting on fiscal deficit, the Finance Minister announced a number of further concessions to business class by way of, inter alia, withdrawal of surcharge on direct tax etc and liberalization of lending norms etc reportedly for further incentivizing them for investment. Such sops, at the cost of national exchequer are destined to fall flat; in fact, investment-growth has been consistently declining during the span of last five years' of BJP rule despite showering of huge concessions on them every year through successive budgets and otherwise also.

Third, FDI has been further liberalized and clearance of FDI through automatic route has been recklessly expanded covering all the strategic sectors of the economy, which will have more destructive impact on the economy instead of employment oriented investment generation. Rather such kind of FDI liberalization, particularly in present global economic scenario will further pounce upon the economic sovereignty of the country.

Hundred percent FDI in single-brand retail trade was justified and sought to be sold by the previous BJP government front-lining the conditionality of 30% sourcing of products from within India claiming to have promoted the domestic manufacturing. Now, that conditionality has been totally eased rather erased in favour of the foreign trading agencies leaving room for widespread evasion, at the cost of domestic retail trade. The 30% sourcing obligation can now be averaged over five years, opening the gate for evading the sourcing obligation for first three /four years and then change the sign-board of the company, a dubious practice that has been continuing since long in almost all the special economic zones by the private business including foreign entities with impunity.

Allowing 100% FDI in coal-mining for all commercial purposes along with 100% FDI in contract manufacturing - all through automatic route, will be a severe blow to national coal miner - the Coal India Ltd which has been creditably performing by consistently improving its production performance despite many hurdles created by the Government. Earlier, FDI was allowed only for captive mining. Now that barrier has also been removed allowing the foreign companies to capture control over country's coal resources for commercial mining including export.

This utterly retrograde move of the Government on coal mining sector will deprive public sector Coal India Ltd of the level playing field in respect of allocation of new coal bearing areas as well as in cost of production. 100% foreign control of a substantial section of country's coal reserves with a right to export will also severely hamper the protection of national priorities in meeting increasing domestic requirement of coal both for household consumption and industrial requirement particularly in power, steel, fertilizers and other sectors. And under the present BJP regime, actively playing a partnership role of imperialist powers and always obliging international finance capital, it is but natural that Coal India will be discriminated in respect of allocation of new coal bearing area for mining vis-à-vis the private and foreign players.

Fourth, the Government has declared its suicidal resolve to go for decisive privatization of CPSUs through multi-pronged routes. Besides strategic sale of major PSUs in steel, pharmaceutical, engineering and other sectors, aggressive steps have already been initiated to sell out around 60% or more Government equity of CPSUs in the market. The notoriety of the exercise is that the control of a large number of PSUs with huge asset base and capacity shall be captured by the private players and concerned CPSUs will be effectively converted into private companies through very small dose of disinvestment. In order to realize the unprecedented divestment target of Rs 1.05 lakh crore, they have been dispensing with all norms and standing practices and resorting to suicidal shortcut. The long selloff list reported in the media include all best performers in the strategic sectors – both physically and financially viz., IOC, NTPC, Powergrid, Oil India, GAIL, NALCO, BPCL, EIL, BEML etc. As a consequence of previous tranches of divestment the present Govt equity holding of these CPSUs are around 52% plus or little less. Therefore the ugly game plan is to convert these CPSUs into private enterprises only by way of transfer of very small dose of shares to private hands. Country's wealth will be transferred for private gains on a platter.

In the background of severe crisis in the economy, deepening every day, these moves of the Government reflects the desperation to benefit only and only the private corporate, both foreign and domestic at the cost of such assets and production structures through a deliberate destructive process.

CITU calls upon the working people and patriotic masses at large from all walks of life to raise their voice of protest against such destructive suicidal onslaught of the Government of the day on the national economy. CITU also calls upon the working class, particularly those in the concerned sectors which are under immediate attack to unite and fight back these nefarious and anti-people designs and frontal attack on the economic sovereignty of the country.

BJP Government Rejects Its Expert Committee Report on Minimum Wage;

Opting for Floor Level Wage

The Union government had appointed an expert committee led by V. V. Giri National Institute of Labour Fellow Anoop Satpathy. ILO representatives were also integrated to it. With much fanfare the Union labour ministry published the report titled as "Determining the Methodology for Fixation of the National Minimum Wage".

The expert committee had recommended Rs.9,750 per month / Rs.375 per day at July 2018 price level as National Minimum Wage or Rs.8892 - Rs.11,622 in four regional level.

CITU has criticized this report for 'Determining the Methodology' anew for fixation of minimum wage shifting from the methodology on 5 criteria as adopted by 15th ILC and approved, and improved by adding 6th criteria, by the Supreme Court in their 1991 judgement. In their 14 October, 2019 Order the Supreme Court once again upheld 15th ILC and SC 1991 criteria and fixed Rs.14,842 at November 2018 price level as the minimum wage for NCT Delhi.

However, Modi government wants to turn all these upside down in favour of the employers. *Telegraph* on 7 September, 2019 reported that Union cabinet rejected its own expert committee report. Backed by the Parliament approving the Code on Wages, the Union government is set for national 'Floor Level Wage' and to make the 'Minimum Wage' infructuous.

Under the Code on Wages, the government can fix the national Floor Level Wage. Modi government has decided to appoint the committee of bureaucrats to fix this floor level wage. (25/10/2019)

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

State	Centre	July 2019	August 2019	State	Centre	July 2019	August 2019
AP	GUNTUR	295	294	MHR	MUMBAI	312	313
	VIJAYWADA	303	298		NAGPUR	403	403
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	299	299		NASIK	362	364
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	286	292		PUNE	351	353
	GUWAHATI	286	287		SHOLAPUR	335	341
	LABAC SILCHAR	279	279	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	335	336
	MARIANI JORHAT	266	271		ROURKELA	319	319
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	262	263	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	324	320
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	354	352	PUN	AMRITSAR	342	349
CHD	CHANDIGARH	317	318		JALANDHAR	325	325
CHS	BHILAI	332	331		LUDHIANA	298	298
DLI	DELHI	307	308	RJN	AJMER	294	295
GOA	GOA	342	334		BHILWARA	298	301
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	285	290		JAIPUR	320	322
	BHAVNAGAR	301	303	TN	CHENNAI	286	286
	RAJKOT	300	299		COIMBATORE	287	286
	SURAT	278	282		COONOOR	339	338
	VADODARA	282	283		MADURAI	302	304
HRY	FARIDABAD	280	283		SALEM	300	298
	YAMUNANAGAR	304	302		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	305	303
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	274	275	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	343	338
J&K	SRINAGAR	281	285		HYDERABAD	270	269
JRK	BOKARO	308	307		WARRANGAL	326	325
	GIRIDIH	349	351	TRP	TRIPURA	267	268
	JAMSHEDPUR	365	364	UP	AGRA	365	366
	JHARIA	371	370		GHAZIABAD	340	343
	KODARMA	391	390		KANPUR	348	351
	RANCHI HATIA	396	398		LUCKNOW	346	350
KNT	BELGAUM	312	309		VARANASI	340	341
	BENGLURU	299	299	WB	ASANSOL	344	345
	HUBLI DHARWAR	342	345		DARJEELING	278	279
	MERCARA	313	312		DURGAPUR	332	331
	MYSORE	318	316		HALDIA	362	363
KRL	ERNAKULAM	322	322		HOWRAH	294	296
	MUNDAKKAYAM	320	320		JALPAIGURI	288	289
	QUILON	372	362		KOLKATA	291	292
MP	BHOPAL	336	336		RANIGANJ	296	296
	CHHINDWARA	314	316		SILIGURI	287	291
	INDORE	289	291		ALL INDIA INDEX	**319**	**320**
	JABALPUR	326	326				

WFTU Day 2019 in Delhi

CITU General Secretary Tapan Sen is addressing the meeting on WFTU Day in New Delhi on 3 October 2019. WFTU Dy. General Secretary S. Dev Roye is also attending apart from the leaders and activists of all WFTU affiliates in India.

Victory of MPS Workers

(Report Page 11)

The Rally

Celebrating the Victory

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Indefinite Strike in HAL

(Report Page 18)

(Left) a rally at Nasik; *(Right)* CITU leader Rahul Mishra addressing HAL striking workers at Lucknow

Agitating BPCL workers in Tamilnadu *(Report Page 17)*

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