

The Voice of the Working Woman



Remembering Vimaldi on her Birth Anniversary

At a time when the country is going for one of the most crucial general elections after independence – to decide whether the country will survive as a sovereign, secular democracy, it is very necessary to remember the legendary leaders of our country, their struggles, sacrifices and contribution. Vimal Ranadive, whose 104th birth anniversary is on 10 April 2019, is one such leader of the country's trade union movement.

Born on 10 April 1915 in a middle class family in Maharashtra, she joined the anti colonial nationalist movement at the tender age of 12-13 as a Seva Dal volunteer. At the age of 15, she was arrested for picketing a foreign cloth shop. The British judge asked her to admit the mistake and apologise. She boldly refused and said “*We know what we have done and for what, we won't apologise*” and went to jail gladly.

In 1930, more than eighty years ago, it was the choice made by a fifteen year old girl, Vimal. It was a choice to fight injustice, to fight all kinds of exploitation and therefore to fight imperialist aggression. She stood by this choice all through her life.

Vimaldi developed solidarity with the cause of the poor, the working class and became a communist. She worked to earn a living for her siblings, married a communist, B T Ranadive, who had to go underground on the day of their marriage. When her son was just two years old she was jailed for two years. She spent many years underground including at the time of the Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi.

She was actively involved in organising workers in Mumbai and was part of the upsurge of the Mumbai working class and the naval ratings in 1946.

She was the first General Secretary of the All India Plantation Workers' Federation, the founder President of the AIFAWH and was the leader of the Beedi workers also. She was the founder Convenor of the AICCWW (CITU) and continued in that position till her death. She was Secretary, CITU and was a member of the central committee of the CPI(M). She was the founder editor of 'The Voice of the Working Woman' and 'Kamkaji Mahila'.

Let us pledge to continue the uncompromising struggle against all kinds of exploitation, injustice and inequalities. Let us fight and oust the authoritarian communal BJP regime. Let us also make a choice -s of commitment to the cause of the toiling people of the world.

The Voice of the Working Woman

Monthly Journal of the AICCWW(CITU)

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The Elections Ahead

The notification for the elections to the 17th Lok Sabha has been issued. This election is going to be the most crucial one in determining the future of our country and its people, particularly the working class and the toiling people.

The BJP government led by Modi totally failed the people. It simply played with the aspirations of the people to create illusions. It has betrayed them through the aggressive pursuit of the neoliberal agenda and commitment to improve 'ease of doing business index', not the lives of the people.

Unemployment rose to the highest level in 45 years; unemployment among the youth and higher educated reached an all time high of 16%; unemployment among the graduates and post graduates was more than 3 and 4 times that of overall unemployment.

Privatisation of health and education meant that only those who have the money can buy education for their children; only those who have the money can buy health services for their families. In the process, it is the women and girl children who are denied and deprived of health, of education. Malnutrition, anaemia among women and children in a country that boasts of being the fastest growing economy are at unacceptable levels. Inequalities have been rising fast. The top nine billionaires in India own the same amount of wealth as the 60 crore people at the bottom.

While the people are made to suffer, bonanzas are heaped on the favoured friends of the ruling party in government. The public sector Hindustan Aeronautics Limited was sidelined and Anil Ambani was made the offset partner in the Rafale deal. Adani was handed over five of the six airports in the country which are being privatised in this phase, with the sixth being gifted to Anil Ambani.

The BJP and Modi have mastered the art of misleading people and diverting their attention. To divert people's attention from their burning livelihood issues and for polarising the country on communal lines, they left Kashmir burning. Hiding their failure in handling the Kashmir issue they are now trying to use Pulwama terrorist attack for their political gains. Instead of holding talks with all concerned, the BJP led government has been resorting to high handed measures and violence. In the process they have pushed more young boys and girls in the state into the hands of terrorists. The surgical strikes of September 2016 did not end terrorism. Demonetisation did not end terrorist funding. Large numbers of people including armed forces and innocent civilians are being killed in terrorist attacks in Kashmir even today, in the aftermath of Pulwama.

The aggressive pursuit of neoliberal policies by the Modi government is accompanied by the dangerous determination to impose its communal agenda. The unity of the people is being disrupted by provoking communal, caste and regional animosities. Any dissent or opposition to its policies is dubbed 'anti national'. The government machinery and administration are used to throttle dissenting voices; even to kill people.

Conscious that it is the patriotic duty of the working class of the country to protect the secular and democratic character of the country and people's unity, the ten central trade unions organised the national convention that called upon the people to defeat this BJP led government of Modi. The 'Workers' Charter' adopted unanimously in the convention highlights what the people of the country want and the direction in which the country has to advance.

This should be used as a weapon in the election campaign and also to prepare the working class for higher forms of united struggles against neoliberal policies.

AIFAWH March to Parliament

Against

Inadequate Budget Allocation and Direct Cash Transfer in ICDS

Forty lakh Signatures Submitted to

Ministry of Women and Child development

More than five thousand Anganwadi Workers and Helpers from all over the country, under the leadership of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH), marched to Parliament on 25 February 2019. They marched to protest against the inadequate budget allocation for ICDS for implementation of increased remuneration and introduction of Direct Cash Transfer in ICDS. In spite of the short notice, the mobilisation was more than expected.

The March which started at around 12 noon from Mandi house had a different look, with more than a hundred red volunteers, in red sarees and salwar kameez. They were carrying red bundles on their heads. These were bundles of signatures collected from beneficiaries to the Prime Minister. The AIFAWH had collected more than forty lakh signatures from anganwadi employees and beneficiaries on a memorandum for strengthening ICDS, for the right to minimum wages and pension for the workers and helpers and against the Direct Cash Transfer in ICDS.

The March was led by Tapan Sen, General Secretary and K Hemalata, President, CITU, A R Sindhu General Secretary, Usharani President, Anju Maini Treasurer, AIFAWH and various state leaders. The red volunteers with the bundles of signatures marched behind them. More than five thousand anganwadi workers and helpers from 14 states - Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, UP and West Bengal marched behind the red volunteers, shouting anti Modi slogans.

The public meeting held at Jantar Mantar was inaugurated by Tapan Sen. The meeting was presided over by Usharani and was addressed by K Hemalata, A R Sindhu, Veena Gupta and various state leaders.

A delegation consisting of A R Sindhu, Usharani, Kailash and Shakuntala met the Secretary, WCD and submitted nearly 40 lakh signatures collected on the demands of strengthening the ICDS and improving the working conditions of anganwadi workers and helpers, to the ministry. Along with the long pending basic demands of regularization, minimum wages of Rs.18000 per month and pension at Rs.6000 per month, the immediate issues of introduction of Direct Cash Transfer in ICDS, non implementation of the existing benefits for both workers and beneficiaries etc were raised.

Problems of implementation of ICDS were discussed at length and the Secretary assured the delegation that no move to weaken the ICDS by involving the NGOS, insisting on Aadhar linkage or by introducing re-school will be allowed. The Secretary also assured that the Ministry will re issue the orders on service conditions of the anganwadi employees.

The announcement with much fanfare by the Prime Minister of an increase in remuneration is yet to be implemented in most parts of the country. Moreover, the amount allocated to ICDS in the interim budget is not adequate to cover the cost of additional remuneration.

The March declared that it will take the issues of institutionalization of ICDS with full facilities as the right of the children to food, health and education, and the rights of the workers for minimum wages and pension to the people, and will work for a change in the anti people policies. AIFAWH will ensure the defeat of the communal anti ICDS, anti labour BJP government in the coming Parliament elections.

The Working Committee of AIFAWH held immediately after the March decided to distribute 20 lakh leaflets among the anganwadi workers and helpers and one crore leaflets among the beneficiaries on the impact of the policies of the BJP government and the importance of defeating this government in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

Workers Charter of Demands

Adopted at National Convention of Workers

On 5th March 2019, New Delhi

Dear worker brothers and sisters!

We, the workers, along with the peasants and other toiling people produce the wealth of our country. It is we who contribute to the economic growth of our country. Yet our burning issues, our serious problems, and our urgent demands have been totally neglected by the government at the centre.

The joint trade union movement has been repeatedly raising the issues of concern to the working class for the last many years. We have repeatedly tried through various means, the latest being the two days' country wide general strike which has received massive support from all sections of the toiling people, to bring our demands to the notice of the government and sought redress, but to no avail.

Today, the country is in a deep crisis. All aspects of our daily life, as that of peasants and agricultural workers and other working people are in crisis. The hard won trade union and labour rights are under attack. Agrarian crisis and rural distress continue unabated. Thousands of peasants are committing suicide. Agricultural workers and poor peasants find no work in the rural areas and are migrating to the cities in large numbers, competing with the unorganised sector workers for low paying jobs without any social security.

Prices of all essential commodities, housing, transport, electricity, education and health etc are increasing. But wages of workers have stagnated. In many sectors and for most of the contract, casual and daily wage workers and workers in the unorganised sector, in fact real wages have come down due to the price rise. The workforce in the informal economy being the worst sufferers, are devoid of any kind of social security. The workers in tea and coffee plantations continue to be fleeced by employers and those in sick industries are on the verge of losing their jobs.

The government is stubbornly refusing to implement the consensus recommendation of the Indian Labour Conference to notify minimum wages as per the 15th ILC formula along with the Supreme Court judgment in the Raptakos & Brett case.

It is not implementing the Supreme Court judgment and the consensus recommendation of the ILC on equal pay and benefits to the contract, casual workers doing the same job as permanent workers.

Despite the consensus recommendation of the ILC the government refuses to recognise the around 1 crore workers engaged in its various schemes, most of them women, as workers. It pays shamefully low remuneration to them in the name of 'honorarium'/'incentive' etc. Labour force participation of women is on a continuous downfall. Discrimination against women workers continues. Sexual harassment at the workplace is on the rise.

Unemployment has become a matter of serious concern, not only for the youth but also for hundreds of thousands of workers who are losing their jobs due to closure and shut down of industries. Employment generation has in fact turned negative in most of the labour intensive sectors.

Despite strong opposition from the workers and their trade unions, the government is aggressively pushing ahead with its programme of amending labour laws, for its goal of climbing up the ladder of 'Ease of Doing Business' index. It has decided to scrap 44 central labour laws merging them

into 4 labour codes. The intention is to deprive the workers of whatever little rights and social security benefits they have achieved through decades of struggles and sacrifices and to push them into being virtual slaves of the employers.

Even before amending labour laws it has found an innovative way to gift employers with the right to 'hire and fire'. It has extended Fixed Term Employment to all sectors through a notification. Through programmes like NEEM (National Employability Enhancement Mission) and NETAP (National Employment Through Apprenticeship Programme), the government seeks to finish permanent employment altogether. Even contract workers are being replaced by apprentices and trainees. The future of our young looks dismal with no permanent employment, job security or social security.

The government has also been adamantly pursuing its policy of privatisation through disinvestment, strategic sale, outright sale etc. It has allowed 100% FDI in all strategic sectors like defence production, railways, insurance, banking, retail trade, etc. It is moving in the direction of denationalisation of the coal mining sector and allowed private commercial coal mining. 600 railway stations along with the land around them belonging to the railways have been identified for handing over to private players. Around 272 items being produced by the public sector ordinance factories including weapons and critical equipment, have been outsourced. Contrary to the claims of 'Make in India', these measures will destroy our manufacturing capability and research initiatives, assiduously developed through the last six decades. Public sector undertakings in other strategic sectors like energy, petroleum, telecom, steel, civil aviation, ports, non coal mines, road transport etc. are also under the privatisation onslaught of the government.

The government has totally neglected its constitutional obligation of providing universal education and health to all its citizens. While government schools, colleges and hospitals are being deprived of finances and neglected, private corporates in the education and health sector are being provided exemptions and concessions.

The demonetisation causing sudden withdrawal of over 86% of the currency has not only caused immense hardship to common people, lakhs of small and medium enterprises have been closed. Lakhs of workers in the unorganised sector have lost their jobs. Lakhs of small peasants have lost their incomes. Not one of the declared goals while pronouncing demonetization was achieved. It was only the digital payment platforms that have benefited.

GST too has wrecked havoc with the lives of the small enterprises and lakhs of workers employed in these. Thousands of small and medium enterprises and retail traders are yet to recover from its impact.

Thousands of crores of rupees, money that the workers and the common people have saved in public sector banks, are being looted by corporate swindlers who are defaulting and fleeing the country. Over 80% of the NPAs of banks are due to the big corporate houses, not more than fifty in number. The government which declines to spend adequate money to ensure basic needs and social welfare to the poor is providing tax concessions and exemptions worth more than Rs 5 lakh crores every year to the big corporates, domestic and foreign.

It is clear that this government is working overtime for the benefit of their corporate masters. It is resorting to authoritarian measures to suppress opposition and resistance to its policies. People, social and human rights activists working to safeguard the democratic rights of dalits, minorities and workers are branded 'anti national', persecuted and even killed.

Not only that. The government at the centre is promoting hatred and animosity and encouraging spreading of communal venom by the various communal organisations. This is meant to divide the workers and other sections of toiling people, disrupt their unity and weaken their struggles

against the neoliberal policies. These attempts to foment hatred and hostility on the basis of religion, caste, region, language etc are a serious threat to working class unity, which is the utmost need of the hour to intensify our struggles against the neoliberal policies that have been attacking our lives and livelihoods.

We, the workers, have been unitedly fighting against these policies since the last over two decades. We have jointly conducted 18 country wide general strikes during this period in addition to scores of sectoral strikes. The participation of workers in these strikes has been continuously increasing.

But when it comes to elections, through which the governments that formulate the policies so vital to our livelihoods and living conditions are elected are concerned, most of the major political parties are totally silent about us or on our issues. Our issues, our demands, the issues and demands of the workers and other sections of toiling people, not even the basic issues and problems relating to a decent and humane living and livelihood, get any place in the discourse during elections. Many of the political parties try to consider people as 'vote banks' on the lines of religion, caste or sub caste, region etc. and take them for granted. Issues not at all concerned with our day to day problems or demands are raised to provoke and polarise people for their electoral benefits. After coming to power, we are totally neglected by the parties. Those in government start obeying orders of their corporate donors and enrich themselves in the process.

How long should this continue? While we need to defeat the present BJP led government which has been aggressively pursuing anti worker, anti people and anti national policies, we should also demand reversal of these policies and formulation of alternative pro worker and pro people policies, whichever government comes to power at the centre.

It is time that workers' issues are raised during the elections. It is time that workers' issues form a major part of the discourse during elections. Let us place our demands, the Workers' Charter, before the political parties and compel them to concretely express their stand on these issues before we decide whom to vote.

Workers' Charter:

- ◆ Fix national minimum wage as per the recommendations of 15th Indian Labour Conference and Supreme Court judgement in the Raptakos & Brett case, which has been reiterated unanimously by subsequent 45th and 46th Indian Labour Conference.
- ◆ Abolish Contract Labour system in perennial nature of job pending which strictly implement equal wage and benefits to contract workers doing the same job as permanent workers, as per Supreme Court judgment.
- ◆ Stop outsourcing and contractorisation of jobs of permanent and perennial nature.
- ◆ Strict implementation of equal pay for equal work for men and women as per Indian Constitution and Equal Remuneration Act and also reiterated by Supreme Court.
- ◆ Minimum Support Price for the produce of the farmers as per the recommendations of Swaminathan Commission, strengthen public procurement system.
- ◆ Loan waiver to farmers and Institutional credit for the small and marginal farmers.
- ◆ Comprehensive legislation covering social security and working conditions for all workers including agricultural workers.
- ◆ Take immediate concrete measures to control sky rocketing prices of essential commodities; ban speculative trading in essential commodities. Expand and strengthen public distribution system; no compulsory linkage of Aadhar to avail services of PDS.
- ◆ Check unemployment through policies encouraging labour intensive establishments; link financial assistance/incentives/concessions to employers with employment generation

in the concerned establishments; fill up all vacant posts in government departments; lift the ban on recruitment and 3% annual surrender of government posts.

- ◆ Assure minimum pension of Rs 6000 per month and indexed pension to all.
- ◆ Recognise workers employed in different government schemes, including anganwadi workers and helpers, ASHAs and others employed in the National Health Mission, Mid day Meal workers, Para teachers, teaching and non teaching staff of National Child Labour Projects, Gramin chowkidars etc as workers and pay minimum wages, social security benefits including pension etc to all of them.
- ◆ Immediately revoke 'Fixed Term Employment' which is in violation of the spirit of ILO Recommendation 204 which India has ratified.
- ◆ Stop disinvestment/strategic sale of public sector undertakings. Give revival package to the important PSUs in the public interest.
- ◆ Revival and opening of sick Jute industries and Tea plantations, as thousands of workers in these industries are facing distress, malnutrition and death due to closure.
- ◆ Revoke the decision to privatise Railways, Defence, Port and Dock, Banks, Insurance, Coal etc. Immediately revoke decision allowing commercial mining of coal mines.
- ◆ Stop privatising Defence production and closure of Defence Units. Strengthen and expand State Owned Defence Industry to achieve self reliance in Defence.
- ◆ Stringent measures to recover bad loans in Banks, take criminal action against deliberate corporate defaulters. Do not pass on the burden of bad loans on banking public through penalties and higher service charges. Stop merger and amalgamation of public sector Banks. Stop closure of Bank Branches. Increase interest rate on Bank deposits to offset inflation rate.
- ◆ Periodical wage revision to all CPSU Workers without insisting any affordability condition.
- ◆ Withdraw the Motor Vehicle Act (Amendment) Bill 2017, and Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2018.
- ◆ Immediately resolve the issues of the central government employees related to the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission.
- ◆ Scrap NPS and restore the Old Pension Scheme.
- ◆ Stop anti worker and pro employer amendments to the labour laws and codifications. Ensure strict implementation of the existing labour laws.
- ◆ Implement paid maternity leave of 26 weeks, maternity benefit and crèche facilities for women workers. No incentive be given to employers who are following amended provision of Maternity Benefit Act as proposed by the Government.
- ◆ Strict implementation of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act. For increase political participation immediate enactment on 33% reservation for women in state legislatures and Parliament.
- ◆ Ratify ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining along with the ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers.
- ◆ Stop dilution of OSH & Welfare provisions through merger of 13 Acts in one Code. Ensure implementation of existing Acts and rules. Fill vacant posts of factory inspectors, Mines inspectors etc and lift ban on inspections. Ratify ILO C-155 and recommendation 164 related to OSH & Environment. Tripartite audit of human and financial loss due to accident should be mandatory.
- ◆ Strengthen Bipartism and Tripartism; make recognition of trade union by the employers mandatory in every establishment; no decision should be taken on any issue related to labour without consensus through discussion with trade unions, ensure regular, meaningful social dialogue with workers representatives.

- ◆ Cut the subsidies given to the corporates.
- ◆ Right to work as fundamental right by amending the Constitution.
- ◆ 300 days of work under MGNREGA. Enact similar legislation to cover urban areas. Fix minimum wages not less than minimum wages of the state.
- ◆ Strict measures to stop the inhuman practice of manual scavenging. Compensation, as per Supreme Court judgment, to the families who die while cleaning sewers.
- ◆ Strict implementation of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act
- ◆ Immediately fill up all backlogs in the posts reserved for SC/ST; reservation of jobs for SC/ST in private sector employment also.
- ◆ No eviction of Adivasis from their habitats, strict implementation of Forest Rights Act for Adivasis.
- ◆ Protect couples opting for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Ensure strict actions against those encouraging/ resorting to so called 'honour killings'.
- ◆ Ensure strict punishment for all guilty of rape and other cases of violence against women. Make such offences "Rarest of the rare" with capital punishment to ensure safety of women in letter and spirit.
- ◆ Ensure effective implementation of Article 51A of the Constitution that calls upon all citizens to promote harmony, spirit of common brotherhood, diversities and to transcend religious, linguistic, regional and sectional culture and to denounce policies derogatory to the dignity of women.
- ◆ Free and compulsory education to all children up to Class XII along with technical education. The budget allocation for education should be 10% of the GDP.
- ◆ Free health care for all. Strengthen health infrastructure, particularly in the rural and tribal areas. Increase government expenditure on health to 5% of GDP.
- ◆ Potable drinking water be provided to whole populace.
- ◆ Protection of street vendors should be ensured. States should frame rules accordingly.
- ◆ In order to protect the interests of Home Based Workers which is women dominated sector ILO Convention 177 for Home Work be ratified along with an Act for Home Based Workers.
- ◆ Workers should have active and effective participation in all Welfare Boards constituted for their welfare. The unspent amount of cess collected under Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board be spent only on welfare of workers. Welfare Boards should have adequate workers representation. The functioning of the boards should be strengthened so that the workers can get registered with the board and have easy access to welfare benefits.
- ◆ The Government should direct the States to frame the rules for inclusion of waste recyclers of the solid waste management in the cities at all levels.
- ◆ Working Journalists Act should be amended to include journalists and workers from all media organisations to ensure decent wages and job security. Constitute new wage board for journalists in print, electronic and digital media to revise wages in media organisations.



INTUC AITUC HMS CITU AIUTUC

TUCC SEWA AICCTU LPF UTUC

And Independent Federations/Associations of Workers and Employees

2nd State Conference of H.P. Mid Day Meal Workers Union

The 2nd State Conference of the Himachal Pradesh Mid-Day-Meal Workers Union (CITU) was held on 9-10 March, 2019 at Kullu. The Conference began with the state president hoisting the flag and delegates offering floral tributes to the martyrs. A total of 107 delegates participated. A five member presidium of Kanta Mahanta, Himi Devi, Remana, Cheman and Santosh conducted the proceedings. Himi Devi placed the condolence resolution.

The All India General Secretary of Mid-Day-Meal workers president, Jaibhagwan inaugurated the conference. He stated that the successive Congress and BJP governments at the centre have not increased the remuneration of MDM workers since 2009, despite giving repeated written and oral assurances nothing has been done. The government is privatizing education and allowing the private sector to function while the NITI Ayog has decided to close down all such schools in the country where enrolment is less than 50 children. The MDM scheme is being handed over to large NGO's like ISKCON, Nandi foundation and Akshya Patra. A notification to open central kitchens was issued by the central government in 2016. Attempts are being made to transfer the expenses of MDM for children into their mother bank accounts. The budget allocation for the MDM scheme is being cut every year to weaken the scheme and the central government is implementing anti-MDM worker and anti-people policies. He gave a call to ensure the defeat of the BJP government in the coming general election.

The political and organizational report was placed by Jagat Ram, underlining the achievements and weaknesses of the union. The report noted that due to the continuous struggles of MDM workers, the state government had to increase their remuneration by Rs.1000. He emphasized that the task of raising organizational, political and ideological consciousness of workers and thereby developing cadres should be given top priority. The conference adopted a target of 7000 membership in the year 2019.

A total of 14 members took part in the discussion on the report which was passed unanimously after the reply.

The conference elected a 33 member state committee with Kanta Mahant as President, Chamanlal, Mahendra and Bahinder as Vice Presidents, Himi Devi as general secretary, Reena, Ratan and Veerma as secretaries and Hetram as treasurer.

The conference decided to build struggles on following demands:

1. Rs. 7500 minimum wage, declared by the government should be given to Midday Meal Workers for 12 months in a year.
2. The condition of 25 children should be removed and 2 MDM workers be appointed in every school.
3. Decision of opening central kitchen, contractorisation and handing over MDM scheme to NGOs be withdrawn.
4. In MDM scheme breakfast should also be provided and the scheme should be extended up to class 12.
5. MDM workers should be allowed to avail holidays given in schools, with payment.
6. 6 months maternity leave be given to the female workers.
7. As per the recommendations of 45th ILC, status of a worker along with gratuity, pension and EPF be given to the worker.
8. Provide adequate budgetary allocation for MDM scheme.
9. The workers of schemes which are being closed should be absorbed/appointed in other schools.

Prem Gautam, CITU state general secretary, in his concluding speech said that the task of strengthening the organization and increasing membership should be at the top of the agenda

and sustained struggles should be launched against the governments' anti-people policies of privatization and globalization.

At the end, the president Kanta Mahat thanked the Kullu district committee for making good arrangement for the state conference.

Safai Workers in Patna Observe IWD for the First Time

In Patna on 8 March 2019 an International Womens Day programme was organized at Nalanda Medical college. The programme, attended by both women and men safai karamcharis, was presided over by Radhika Devi.

Arun Kumar Mishra, Bihar CITU leader, said that inequality is increasing the world over and women suffer the most. Anti women social attitudes act as a big barrier for women's advancement and religious, caste and gender based discrimination increases inequality. India is placed at 108 in the Gender Gap Index, with only Bangladesh ranked lower than us. He added that the unpaid work done by women in India, of at least 5 hours a day, amounts to 3.1% of the GDP.

Manjul Kumar Das said that slogan of for IWD this year is "Balance for Better" stating that gender equality, sex ratio equality and equality in wages are a necessary precondition for betterment. The struggle for these must be continued. He recollected that Clara Zetkin, in the 2nd Socialist International, had criticized the leaders who opposed women's entry in factories on the grounds that they were responsible for lower wages and longer working hours.

NMCH Patna safai workers Sangeeta Devi and Punia Devi narrated how the contractor and accountant threatened them with loss of job and how, after joining the union, they replied "*We will work and have wages too, and will struggle together with male workers against less wages and for ESI and EPF.*"

Shankar Sah expressed happiness at the participation of the women workers in the IWD programme, which is proof of their rising consciousness. He stressed on the need to mobilize large numbers of women in the struggle for women's safety, for abolition of contractualisation, for Rs 18,000 per month minimum wage and Rs 300 monthly pension.

IWD in Kerala

International Women's Day on

March 8 was celebrated by the working women coordination committee. Copies of the document prepared by the All India centre were distributed to all the districts. A campaign was held based on this year's theme - **Equality, Dignity and Safety.**

Programmes were organised

in 14 districts by the working women coordination committee. In Kannur, the programs were inaugurated by Smt. P.K.Srimati. A *thiruvathira* based on the theme of the corrupt rule of the Modi government, was greatly appreciated by the public. Programmes in all the districts with large participation of women in these campaigns, proved the fact that the Kerala government as well as the LDF are giving prime importance to women's safety and security.



Indian Workers' Convention in Solidarity with the people of Venezuela Against Imperialist Aggression

RESOLUTION

We, the class oriented trade unions in India affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) representing the overwhelming multitudes of the Indian Working Class in this convention held on 19 March 2019, at BTR Bhawan, New Delhi, firmly and unequivocally

- Condemn US-led imperialist aggression in the internal matter of Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela scuttling the sovereign rights of the people of Venezuela, continuing its criminal tradition of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries
- Declare that the planned campaign and action by the US and its allies against the democratically elected Maduro government, creating dual power in the country is totally against the 'Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations'. It is not only illegitimate, uncalled for and undemocratic but also part of a strategy of creating a situation of civil war endangering the sovereignty of Venezuela to pursue the imperialist economic interests.
- Recall that USA in 2002 also tried a coup against the mass leader Hugo Chavez and continued to impose inhuman economic sanctions.
- Condemn the acts of USA freezing \$7 billion of Venezuelan state oil company's (PDVSA) assets and giving access to the Venezuelan state assets to the UK, blocking the legitimately elected Maduro government from withdrawing \$ 1.2 billion worth of gold deposited in the Bank of England which are brazen violation of international laws.
- Denounce the attitude of the Modi Government deviating from India's most popular foreign policy, refusing to come out categorically in defence of Venezuela's sovereignty and the right of its own people to decide their political leadership. Further, India's own national interest in bringing oil from Venezuela is coming under severe strain due to US sanctions.
- Demands the government of India must reiterate its long cherished policy of long standing friendship and mutual co-operation with the Venezuelan people, and not to succumb to the pressure of Donald Trump's calls against Venezuela.
- Firmly believe that the imperialist efforts in Venezuela will be foiled by the people and the working class of Venezuela and congratulate them for bravely fighting the imperialist aggression, defending the sovereignty of the country and the democratically elected President Maduro.
- We denounce and condemn the biased and prejudiced coverage by the international and Indian media with misleading stories to support the group rival to the elected Bolivarian Government of Republic of Venezuela. This actually helps the imperialist forces to destabilize elected governments in various parts of the world, which has been witnessed even in earlier times.

Finally, the Convention appeals to the Indian working class and the patriotic people of the country to mobilize mass of the people in support of the people of Venezuela.

On behalf of Indian Working Class

AITUC

CITU

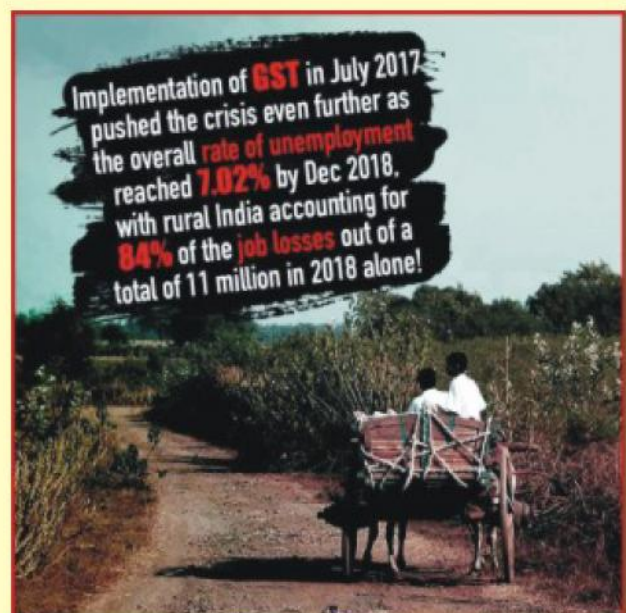
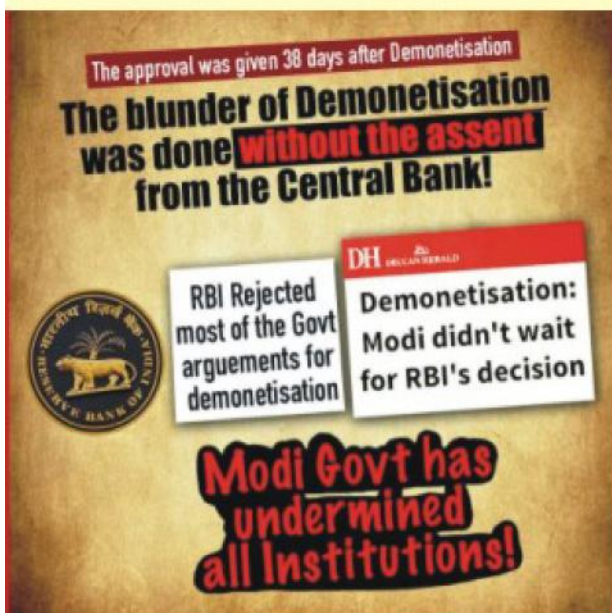
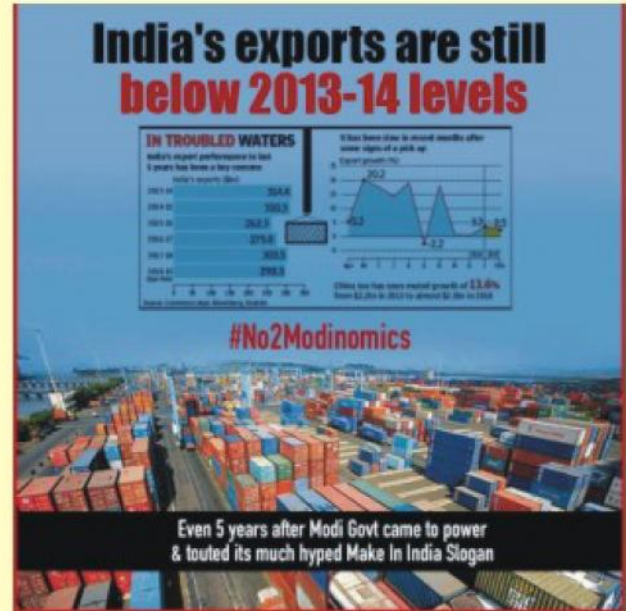
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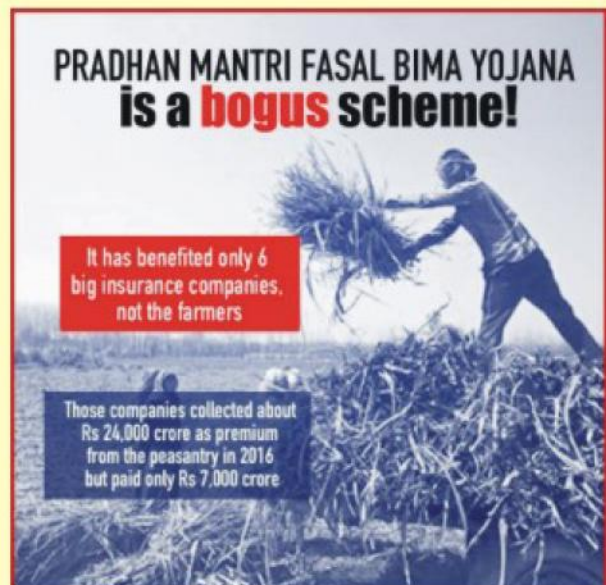
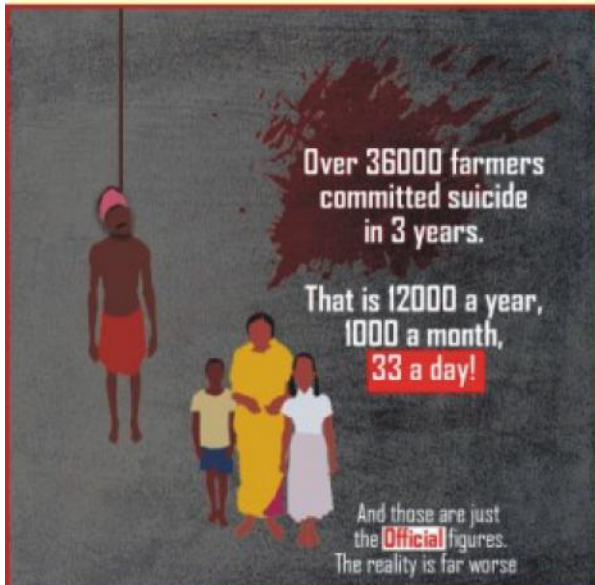
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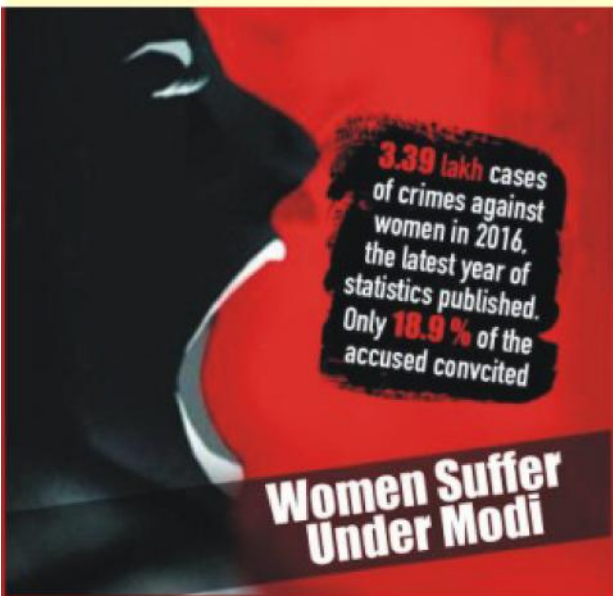
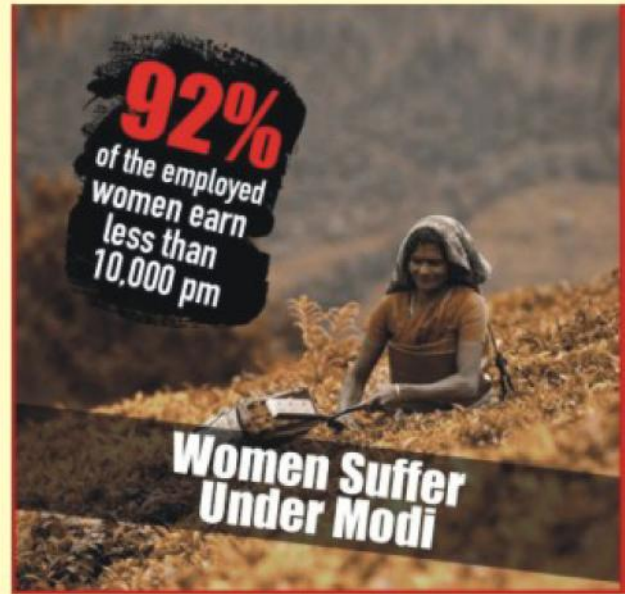
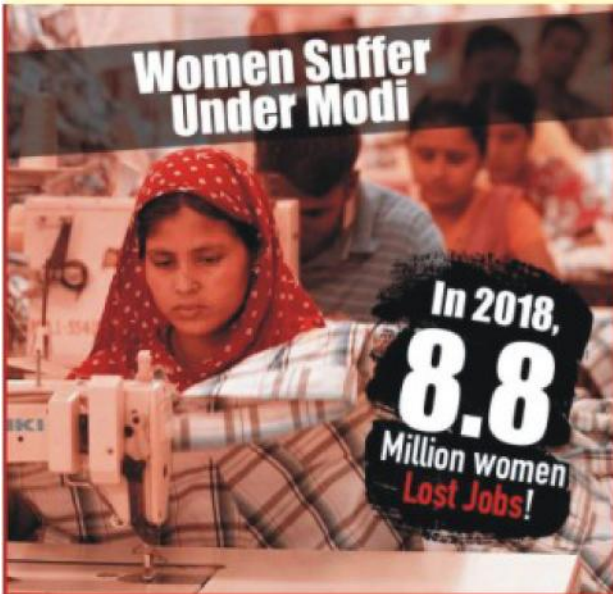
Vote for LEFT and SECULAR Parties DEFEAT BJP



Vote for LEFT and SECULAR Parties DEFEAT BJP



Vote for LEFT and SECULAR Parties DEFEAT BJP



Vote for LEFT and SECULAR Parties DEFEAT BJP

No place for middlemen!
No tolerance for corruption!
No fake beneficiaries
swindling away recourses!
This is a New India!



Reality:

GSPC
THE BIGGEST DEFENCE SCAM

RAFAEL DEAL

व्यापम





नीतिव मोदी!
मोहुल चोकसी!
ललित मोदी!

"After the Surgical Strikes & Air strikes post Uri & Pulwama respectively, PM Modi had evolved India's internal security doctrine that we must attack terror at the point of its origin!"

– Arun Jaitley

Reality: Under BJP

The Number of terror incidents saw a rise of **176 %**


The number of security personnel killed saw a rise of **93%**

Defeat BJP to ensure a peaceful & safe society!

The Mob culture has been created by the BJP and saffron groups

Jharkhand: Man beaten to death by sister's 'harassers', brother in hospital

Police have arrested two people in connection with the case, and are currently in search for the others involved.



Economists Allege Political Interference in Statistical Data

Data Trouble
108 global economists and social scientists say questionable methodology being used to revise or suppress data

THEY CITE THREE INSTANCES TO MAKE THEIR POINT

- 1) New series in 2015 that showed higher growth in FY13 & FY14
- 2) Back series by CSO in 2018 against one compiled by NSC
- 3) No release of the latest periodic labour force survey

The group said political interference hurts official data credibility, autonomy of statistical bodies

"Deep agrarian distress!"

"Unemployment at 45 year highs!"

"Economy in the dumps!"

The Juma Sarkar's only response has been to fudge & bury unfavourable statistics!

#LootSarkarJhootSarkar

Under Modi, Education has Become Costlier and Less Useful

Savera

For Pradeep Kumar, who runs a small pan-cigarette shop in one of Delhi's busy commercial areas, the future depends on his daughter's education. She is studying for a professional course. Pradeep and his family are diverting most of their hard-earned money to pay her fees and other necessities like books, and even a laptop. *"I don't want my children to struggle like me. I hope her studies will liberate us from poverty,"* he says.

This dream – of a good education leading to a well-paying job – is seen by practically every family in India. Education is seen as the path out of deprivation and marginalisation. That is why the country has over 34 crore students of all sorts, from nursery going tiny tots to PhD scholars and beyond.

But silently, and unknown to all these dreamers, a tragedy is unfolding. The education that they are so thirsty for has inexorably become more expensive, more unreachable, and – most importantly – more irrelevant because of poor quality. This process, sadly, has been aggravated under the present Modi government, which has cut government funding for education, encouraged costly private profiteers to set up educational shops, favoured elite institutions, criminally neglected the training of teachers and destroyed curricula by introducing backward and mythological content at the cost of modern progressive ideas. By not creating jobs for educated youth, it has crushed the dreams of lakhs of families.

Spending on Education

Since it came to power in 2014, the Modi government has deliberately cut spending on education (See table below). As a share of total budget spending, education has dipped from 4.1% in 2014-15 to 3.5% in the Budget presented last month for 2019-20. In terms of share of GDP, education spending has gone down from 0.55% to 0.45% in the same time span.

Remember that education spending is done by both central and state governments. So, the Modi government has shifted the burden on to the state governments, which are already highly indebted. The combined share of education spending (central+states) still makes up only about 3% of GDP whereas at least 6% is needed, according to experts. This steady cut in education funding has severely damaged the lakhs of schools and colleges in the country because less funds means less (or poorly paid) teachers, less laboratories, less libraries, less classrooms, less toilets or drinking water.

According to the government's own admission (Rajya Sabha Q. No.387), nearly 11 lakh school teachers' posts are lying vacant across the country. In many cases, they are replaced by guest teachers or para teachers who may be poorly qualified and are definitely poorly paid. In recent months, such teachers – mostly women - have been agitating for better salaries in many states including West Bengal, Punjab, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, J&K, etc.

In higher education institutions too, there is a similar disarray because an estimated 40% of teachers are ad hoc or temporary or guest lecturers. About 1.37 lakh teaching posts in rural colleges (RS Q.No.111) and 5600 posts in central universities (RS Q.No.380) are lying vacant. The government has been pumping in money to open elite institutions like IITs and IIMs but over 6335 teaching positions are vacant in IITs, IIMs and NIITs (RS Q.No.2335). In most of the colleges, buildings and other facilities are in bad shape, classes are huge because teachers are less and academic standards have plummeted.

Modi Govt. Spending on Education

	As % of	
	Total Budget	GDP
2014-15	4.1	0.55
2015-16	3.8	0.49
2016-17	3.6	0.47
2017-18	3.8	0.48
2018-19 RE	3.5	0.44
2019-20 BE	3.5	0.45

Source: Union Budget documents

Growth of Private Profit Shops

Even as the government system is starved of funds, private schools, colleges and universities continue to be granted recognition. They are given land at cheap rates and all kinds of tax breaks are awarded. Most of the bigger colleges and universities are owned by industrial or business houses, which save tax and earn enormous profits from these education shops. It is estimated that nearly 47% of school children are now in private schools although some states like Kerala have reversed the trend after the LDF government started strengthening the government schools.

These private schools charge exorbitant fees and families are forced to bear costs for all kinds of meaningless expenses. The schools have tie ups with uniform suppliers, shoes suppliers, text books suppliers, sports gear suppliers and so on, and students are forced to buy from them. Families have to spend a lot on transport too. The Modi government, far from restraining such extortion has in fact encouraged these private schools. The Sangh parivar itself runs thousands of these private schools which are now getting subsidies and help from the Modi government.

Most Affected – Poor People, Adivasis, Dalits

The most damaging effect of the shrinking of government supported education and growth of private education is experienced by the poorer sections of society – workers, landless labourers, small farmers, informal sector workers. Adivasis and Dalits, who already suffer from educational deprivation are affected badly because schools in remote areas are closed down or teachers are not appointed for them, and reservation for these sections is not followed by private institutions.

Cuts in funds also mean that many supportive measures like scholarships for needy families, especially Adivasis and Dalits, or for children from minority communities, have been cut or obstructed. In the case of pre- and post-matric scholarships for Adivasis and Dalits, the Modi government refused to sanction the required amount for years, insisting on so called scrutiny of students' bona fides. This resulted in thousands of students dropping out.

Falling Learning Levels

A direct result of the Modi government policy of killing the government schooling system, and generally of degrading the whole educational ethos, is the shocking fact that between 2014 and 2018 learning levels of rural school students have either stagnated or gone down marginally. [See Table below]

In the Annual Survey of Education-Rural (ASER) carried out by an NGO, it was discovered that the proportion of class 5 students who could read a class 2 level text had marginally increased from 48% to 50.5%. Among class 8 students this proportion had fallen from nearly 75% to 73%. If half of class 5 students and a quarter of class 8 students can't even read a simple class 2 level text, what have they been learning in schools?

Similarly, the proportion of students who could do a simple arithmetic division inched up marginally among class 5 students from just over 26% in 2014 to about 28% in 2018. But among class 8 students, this share was stagnant at around 44%.

There cannot be a more severe indictment of the Modi government's policies than these survey results. In many cases it was found that private school students were performing no better than their government school counterparts.

The Fraud Called Skill Training

The Modi government has placed a misconceived emphasis on providing so called skills to lakhs of young people. This emerges from their idea that general education is useless and if people have certain kinds of

Learning Levels Are Not Increasing		
(% students)		
	2014	2018
Can read class 2 text		
Class 5	48	50.5
Class 8	74.7	73
Can do simple division		
Class 5	26.1	27.9
Class 8	44.2	44.1
Source: ASER 2018		

skills, they can just go out and get jobs. So, while imposing drastic cuts in school and higher education, the government had allocated Rs.1200 crore for the much-hyped Skill India mission.

The latest data shows that this mission has failed miserably. According to the government Skill India website, about 26 lakh persons were imparted skill training through short term courses till date but only about 10 lakh of them had found jobs. Since the nature of jobs that they got is not revealed, even this miserable rate of placement does not show whether the skill training helped the youth to get jobs or they were doing other jobs. Media reports suggest that skill training is not helping youth get any particularly attractive jobs. In fact, in the name of skill training many industrial units are using the cheap labour of trainees to get their work done.

Destruction of Universities

Meanwhile the Modi government has brazenly pursued a policy of appointing Sangh supporters to various posts (both academic and administrative) in the education system, especially higher education institutions. A host of institutions, including UGC, NCTE, AICTE, JNU, ICSSR, ICHR, FTII, IITs and IIMs, and many well-known universities have been packed with Sangh supporters. Several newly appointed Vice Chancellors of universities are known Sangh supporters.

These appointees have systematically gone about destroying the administration, flouting rules, making new draconian regulations, appointing their cronies to various posts and generally functioning as storm troopers of the RSS and the Modi government. The case of JNU is well known, where the students, teachers and karmacharis have been waging a long struggle against the authoritarian and arbitrary functioning of the pro-RSS vice chancellor Jagadeesh Kumar.

This approach is not merely a matter of nepotism, where some political friends and cronies are being appointed as part of patronage. Under the Modi government, the main purpose of these moves is to subvert the democratic atmosphere and thinking in universities and replace it with the Sangh ideology. Again, JNU is a typical example where the student wing of RSS has been given a free hand to initiate violent activities, backed by the administration and the RSS lobby within the teaching community. In several other universities like BHU, HCU, AU, JU, etc. students rights have been curbed, Dalit and Adivasi students attacked or restrained, girl students asked to refrain from going out or wearing jeans and so on. What this means for common students is that not only are their rights to study or behave in a free atmosphere curtailed but they also lose out on the academic excellence and standards that such institutions were known for.

Communalisation of Curricula

In its drive to remove all modern ideas and thinking from schools and universities, the Modi government and the Sangh Parivar have energetically been changing the content of school text books, cutting syllabi in higher education and propagating all kinds of nonsensical, fictional “ideas”, “theories” and “facts”. It is sad to see that, for example, the Indian Science Congress was turned into a circus with several Sangh supported “scientists” putting forth “papers” that claimed that plastic surgery, nuclear weapons or air travel existed in ancient India. Things have come to such a pass that Nobel laureates described the Science Congress as a “joke” and refused to attend it.

In several states, BJP governments introduced changes in school text books to include or enlarge Hindu fundamentalist ideas or interpretations which have no factual basis. History has been a discipline that has been especially targeted by the Sangh loyalists because only by rewriting history can they glorify and justify their brand of communal ideology. The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) is now rewriting the whole history of India from a Sangh perspective.

All this is indeed a sign of this government’s hostility towards education. It also shows that the ruling BJP and Sangh parivar have no worries if they destroy the future of India by destroying the education system. Their nationalism and patriotism is limited to war cries and chest thumping. When it comes to real advancement of the country – education being a key part of that – they want to drag people back into mythological darkness.

Women Resolve to Fight for Womens' Charter

The foremost call by the women's organisations on International Women's Day this year was for a Women's Charter for the ensuing parliamentary elections. The women called for unleashing a campaign for a democratic and secular government to strengthen women's struggle for equality and emancipation and highlighting the **womens' charter**

The following are the major demands.

Political Reservation

- ◆ Enact the 33 per cent Women's Reservation Bill to immediately reserve one-third seats in Parliament and state assemblies for women.
- ◆ Remove all unconstitutional provisions in states preventing women from contesting in panchayat and municipal elections to ensure their participation in 50 per cent reservation in these decision-making bodies.

Food Security and Price Rise

- ◆ Universalise the PDS to include only tax payers. Ensure a minimum entitlement of 35 kgs of food grains per household. Ensure ration cards to all, especially single women, unorganized sector workers, disabled, migrants and street dwellers.
- ◆ Strengthen the PDS and provide pulses, sugar, tea, edible oil, salt, milk and vegetables at controlled prices through ration shops.
- ◆ Remove the cap on number of domestic LPG cylinders available at subsidised prices. Ensure a minimum quota of at least 5 litres of kerosene per person at controlled prices through the PDS shops. Provide subsidised LPG for cooking mid day meals and at ICDS Centres.
- ◆ Stop cash transfers, linkage of Aadhaar and biometric machines for availing of essential commodities, especially food and fuel, through the PDS.
- ◆ Universalise the ICDS. Ensure hot cooked meals in ICDS, MDMS and other nutrition programs

Employment and Wages

- ◆ Remove the 100 work days cap in the MNREGA. Revise work norms and ensure payment of minimum wages to women. Remove all backlogs on wages. Ensure implementation of crèches at worksites.
- ◆ Enact an Urban Employment Guarantee Act.
- ◆ Regularise ICDS, ASHA, mid day meal and other scheme workers with minimum wages, pensions and social security benefits.
- ◆ Universalise and implement the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act of 2008.
- ◆ Implement a special protective legislation for agricultural workers for minimum and equal wages, maternity benefit and pensions and other social security for them.
- ◆ Recognise working women in the organised and unorganised sector as independent economic units.
- ◆ Ensure equal and index linked minimum wages of at least Rs 18,000 per month.
- ◆ Implement a universal and mandatory child care scheme.
- ◆ Set up committees and ensure implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act.
- ◆ Include women's Self Help Groups as part of priority credit sector and provide them with loans at four per cent.

Social Development

- ◆ A minimum universal non-contributory publicly funded pension of Rs 2,000 per month for all women above the age of 55 years, all widows and all disabled women, irrespective of age.
- ◆ Increase public spending on education to six per cent and on health to five per cent of the GDP.
- ◆ Regulate and bring social control in private health services. Promote universal and free public health care for all.
- ◆ Regulate and monitor clinical trials.

- ◆ Enact a central law to provide free and compulsory education in the age group 0-18 years, with special emphasis on the girl child.
- ◆ Remove the two child norm. Give priority to single women, SC, ST, minority women headed households and disabled women in all welfare schemes. Ensure rehabilitation of women and children in households affected by suicides of farmers, handloom workers, agricultural workers, etc.

Resource Mobilisation and Budgetary Allocations

- ◆ Increase substantially public expenditure on economic and social development programmes for the people, maintain integrity and ensure full utilisation of allocated resources, stop budget cuts on pro-people works.
- ◆ Provide central budgetary support for the effective implementation of the PWDV Act, anti-Sexual Harassment Act, Criminal Law Amendment Act and for schemes to support survivors of crimes against women, particularly sexual assault, acid attack, honour crimes and sectarian violence.
- ◆ Stop proliferation of liquor vends as a source of revenue mobilisation.
- ◆ Ensure that all ministries and departments effectively allocate at least one third of total budget for women. Ensure a minimum of 30 per cent allocations for women within schemes for SC, ST, denotified tribes, minorities and other socially deprived groups. Ensure that allocations for sub-plans for minorities, dalits and tribals are not diverted.

Violence against Women and Legal Issues

- ◆ Implement all the recommendations of the Justice Verma Committee report. Include sexual violence against women from SC, ST and minority communities as aggravated sexual assault. Make marital rape an offence. Safeguard Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code.
- ◆ Provide central budgetary support for the effective implementation of the PWDV Act, anti-Sexual Harassment Act and schemes to support survivors of crimes against women, particularly sexual assault, acid attack, honour crimes and sectarian violence.
- ◆ Fast track all cases of violence against women within a legally bound period of time.
- ◆ Stringent implementation of the PNDT Act. Safeguard women's right to safe abortion.
- ◆ Protect young couples in a relationship and their right to choose a partner. Enact a comprehensive stand-alone law to deal with crimes in the name of "Honour" and to regulate *khap panchayats*.
- ◆ Amend the criminal law so that the statutory rape provision does not apply in consensual sexual relations between young couples when the girl is 16 years or more and the age difference is 3 years or less.
- ◆ Enact a comprehensive law to prevent trafficking of women and children for labour and sexual exploitation. Oppose the proposal to de-link prostitution and trafficking. Make child labour illegal in all forms even when it is supposed to be in the interest of 'family enterprise'.
- ◆ Enact a law for equal rights in marital and inherited property for all women. Strengthen laws relating to maintenance for women and children. Ensure protection and adequate maintenance and rehabilitation for all deserted women including those who are victims of instantaneous talaq. Scrap ordinance criminalising triple talaq.
- ◆ Make registration of marriages compulsory.
- ◆ Introduce and enforce a stringent liquor policy to control production and sale of liquor. Delegate powers to women gram sabhas and ward sabhas to permit opening liquor vends in the area.
- ◆ Ensure adequate economic and social rehabilitation for LGBTQ community and protection of privacy of same sex adult consensual relationships.

Others

- ◆ Institute and implement a code of conduct for the prevention of anti-women derogatory statements by persons in public office. Draft and implement a gender-sensitive media code.
- ◆ Strengthen the autonomous functioning of the National and State Commissions for Women, the selection and composition of the members must be made through an institutionalised, independent and transparent process and members should not be political appointees but experienced professionals and women's rights activists.
- ◆ Promote and financially support women's studies centres in all universities.

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan Dhan Yojana – A Total Fraud

A R Sindhu

Just one month before the notification for the next Lok Sabha elections, the Modi Government announced a Pension Scheme for the unorganized sector workers, who earn less than Rs.15,000 a month, '*Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan Dhan Yojana*' in the interim budget and notified it via Ministry of labour and Employment Gazette Notification dated 7th February 2019. The scheme, as per the Finance Minister "...will provide assured monthly pension of Rs 3,000, with a contribution of 100 rupees per month, for workers in unorganised sector after 60 years of age", on closer examination turns out to be a total fraud and a deceit of the workers.

The finance minister claimed that the government will also provide a matching contribution of Rs 100 for every unorganised worker covered under the scheme and "*The scheme will benefit 10 crore workers, may become the world's biggest pension scheme for the unorganised sector in five years*". Later the Prime Minister announced that they are going to cover all the 42 crore unorganised sector workers. But the government which allocated Rs.750 crores for cow protection in the budget had made an allocation of only Rs.500 crores to cover the 42 crore unorganized sector workers who according to the minister "*produce half of the country's GDP*"!

Announcement in five years: The BJP, which had promised to "*strengthen the Pension and Health Insurance safety nets for all kinds of labourers*" in its election manifesto in 2014, had announced this scheme just one month before the next Lok Sabha Election. The scheme is notified under the 'Unorganised Sector Workers' Social Security Act 2008.' In its five years of rule the central trade unions organized three General Strikes in which one of the major demands was for social security and pension of Rs.6000 per month for all workers. The BJP did not remember the unorganized sector workers till the elections are going to be declared. This is one of the biggest election stunts '*chunavi joomlas*' the NDA Ministry has made in the last 5 years.

Non viable for the workers: A primary examination itself reveals that the scheme has not taken care of the ground reality of the unorganised sector workers in our country. The scheme demands that a worker pay the premium of Rs.55 to Rs.200 per month regularly for a minimum of 20 years to get the pension. The 42 crore unorganised sector workers include the agricultural workers, who get less than a hundred days of work a year. A good number of unorganized sector workers are migrant labourers who change the place of the work as well. It will not be possible for the workers to pay the premium uninterruptedly and this will end up with their money being taken over by the fund.

Exclusion of the most needy: The scheme which claims to be covering 'all' unorganized sector workers' excludes nearly twenty percent of the workers who are above forty years of age! **It means that the workforce above 40 years, which is the most needy section, will not be included in the scheme.**

No one is going to be benefitted for the next 20 years: The exclusion of the workers above the age of 40 yrs means that no worker is going to get any benefit for the next 20 years! A worker of the age 18 years will keep paying the government for the next 42 years. 10 crore workers will pay Rs.12,000 crore annually as premium for the next 20 years; i.e, the poor rickshaw pullers, *rehri patri* workers (street vendors), mid day meal workers, construction workers, anganwadi workers and helpers, MNREG workers, ASHA workers will all pay the

government Rs. 2,40,000 crore, in 20 years without getting a single penny back! This is nothing but making the unorganized sector workers, who do not even have any permanent income, pay the government such a huge amount which the government can utilize for financing the corporates.

If we assume even one tenth of the claim of the government is achieved, i.e., one crore workers are enrolled, they will pay Rs.1200 crores to the government in a year and Rs.24,000 crores in 20 years. The allocation for the so called matching grant by the Modi government is Rs.500 crores.

Only spouse can be the nominee: In this strange scheme designed to loot the workers, only the spouse (husband/wife) of the worker can be the nominee. It means that the workers who are single, widow or widower and if he/she dies before 60 years, the entire amount will be taken over by fund and her/his kin will not get any money. Only the spouse will either get the accumulated money or he/she can continue in the scheme.

Many women working in the unorganised sector are widows. Even if the children of the worker who dies (even in an accident) are minors, they will not get a single paisa.

In case of accident and permanent disability of a worker, either his/her spouse can continue or he/she can get back whatever amount paid by him/her only. There is no provision for any other benefit. In many schemes of the LIC, there are much better provisions.

Assured pension, Rs.3000 per month: The government declared that the workers will get a monthly pension of Rs.3000 per month. But even for the organized sector workers in EPF, the guaranteed pension is only Rs.1000 pm (That too very recently). Given the track record of the government of India, one cannot believe that this promise can be fulfilled. Even if this promise is fulfilled, the value of Rs. 3000 after 20 years, if we consider inflation, will be less than Rs.1000 whereas the demand of the trade union movement is monthly pension of minimum Rs.6000 for all workers at the present price level. The much touted pension scheme does not consciously have any provision for indexation of the pension amount.

Workers at loss as per interest calculation: There are some startling statistics about the loot of the workers through this scheme. According to National Herald daily, the calculation goes like this: A person at the age of 18 joining the scheme will pay Rs.55 per month, with the government's contribution, it will be Rs.110 per month. He/she has to pay the amount for 42 years (till the age of 60 years). If this is remitted to a recurring deposit, the return after 42 years will be Rs.5,76,315! If we put this amount in fixed deposit the monthly interest will be Rs.5042! It means the worker will lose Rs.2042 per month as well as the principal amount of Rs.5,76,315.

If we go by the rates in any commercial bank in India, in 42 years, the accumulated amount through this recurring deposit scheme will be Rs.4,48,922 and its monthly interest will be Rs.3367! So, the monthly loss will be Rs.337 and in addition one will lose the accumulated Rs.4,48,922!

Scheme Workers: The government is frantically pushing for enrolment of the anganwadi workers, helpers, ASHA workers and even MNREGA workers (who get jobs for less than 100 days a year in a family) etc. Although neither in the budget speech nor in the notification were these sections included and neither have the Central Ministries issued letters to the states in this regard. The Government claims in that in ten days more than 14 lakh workers are enrolled. The scheme necessitates linking of your bank account. The anganwadi workers, helpers, ASHA workers, Mid Day Meal workers all have bank accounts and the money can be deducted from their account. So the government is pushing to include them so that there will be regular payment.

In Pondicherry, where the anganwadi workers and helpers get a salary of more than Rs.15,000 per month, but have no pension, they cannot join this scheme. In states like Kerala, Haryana, Telangana, AP etc anganwadi workers are getting around Rs.12,000 a month, and have promises of increase, will be excluded from the scheme once they get Rs.15000 per month.

No need to pay back much: The life expectancy of Indian population is around 68 years. It will definitely be much less for the unorganized sector workers and may be 65 years or less. Experience shows that the malnourished, hungry worker will not even live up to 60 years. The workers who do not have a regular income will find it difficult to pay the premium. So all those money will go to the Fund.

EPF, ESI or Comprehensive social security scheme

If the intention of the government is good, why can't it include the unorganized sector workers in the EPF and ESI Schemes or introduce such schemes, which had benefitted crores of workers and earned wide acceptability and credibility.

The EPF is having provisions of loan and pension, partial withdrawal and the accumulated amount belongs to the worker and his/her nominee. This government which declared the pension scheme for unorganized sector workers just one month before elections is not concerned that even the social security schemes like EPF and ESI cover even less than 50% of the workers who are legally entitled and has no programme for the enrolment. The government instead is now paying the share of the employers but not that of the employees in the EPF in the name of new employment under the Prime Minister Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)! While the allocation for this scheme is a mere Rs.500 crore, the government had already paid more than Rs.3648 crores for the employers' contribution to EPFO.

Moreover, there are reports that a considerable amount of the workers in the EPFO which was invested in the share market in tradable bonds in IL&FS Investor Company, in spite of the opposition of the workers' representatives in the board, is totally lost, with the company going bankrupt. The government is not coming out with any clarification. The fund accumulating in the PMSYM scheme also is at the same risk.

The need of the hour is a fully government funded comprehensive social security scheme ensuring health care including maternity, accident protection, superannuation for pension, children's education etc for all other sections of working people including agricultural workers and peasants, with a token contribution just to facilitate enrolment.

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CITU Condemns Hasty Move of BJP Government to Privatise Six Airports

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions denounces the hectic move to hand over six airports of the country, mostly in the state capitals cities, to chosen private players on the terms which clearly appear to be a big bonanza to the most favoured private corporate - the Adani Group, which incidentally has no exposure to the airport or aviation related sector. The airports at Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Trivandrum, Mangalore and Guwahati have been put on fast track privatisation with a target to complete the deal well before election is announced.

All these airports, rather the national assets, under sale, were developed and modernized by the Airport Authority during the span of the last decade, spending thousands of crores of rupees of tax-payers money. Now, the Modi government is in visible haste to hand over these readymade functional as well as profit making airports to the private hands at a time when the government's tenure is coming to an end within months.

And for handing over the these readymade modernized airports with huge real estate assets, altogether new modalities have been discovered by the BJP governmentt, may be to celebrate its latest pre-election deal with corporates, which is quite innovative, to ensure a big bonanza to the most favoured private buyer. The private operator will be required to pay the Airport Authority an amount ranging from Rs 115/- to Rs 174/- per month per passenger. And there will be no sharing of the huge non-aeronautical commercial revenues out of the real estate and huge commercial space annexed to every airport, which is always much higher than the aeronautical revenues for almost all the airports under sale.

It is reported in the media that post-privatisation of these six airports, Airport Authority will be getting an upfront payment of around Rs 2500 crore within 90 days and thereafter Rs 525 crore annually as concession fee. Can these paltry returns to AAI be compared with the total amount AAI has spent towards modernization and development of these six airports? If this comparison is made and also the incremental prospect of revenue generation from these airports in the background of fast expanding aviation sector is taken into account honestly, then this major pre-election deal by the Modi government is going to be a big bonanza for the favoured private player at the irreparable cost of the national exchequer and national interest.

CITU opines, as such, there has been no urgency to fast track the privatisation of these six airports so far as operational and financial efficiency is concerned. The Airport Authority of India successfully developed and modernized with huge investment by itself almost all the major airports of the country and has been operating this crucial infrastructure quite efficiently, both financial and operational. A private new entrant operator like the Adani Group, which has no experience in airport management, is now being handed over these airports only to benefit the new operators, and not for better airport operation in the least.

CITU vehemently condemns this hasty pre-election deal of handing over six of the country's airports to favoured private operators by the government which is nothing but a loot of national assets and infrastructure by private corporates.

CITU calls upon the working class in general and the trade union movement in particular to oppose and resist the privatisation of these six airports through countrywide agitation and struggle.

Madhya Pradesh Appoints its First Transgender Government Officer

In a first in Madhya Pradesh, the state has appointed a transgender government officer. Sanjana Singh, 36, recently joined as the personal secretary of the director of social justice and disabled persons welfare.

Delighted over the achievement, Sanjana, who was forced to part from her family at the age of 15 and join a transgender group, said that she has finally achieved her 'due place in society'.

Before her present posting, Sanjana had become the first para-legal volunteer of the District Legal Services Tribunal. She was also a nominated member of the Lok Adalat of the tribunal and used to hear cases in the company of several judges. Also, Singh was earlier associated with an NGO and was working on child and women health since 2008.

Not only did her family abandon her, even the transgender community with whom she grew up, deserted her after she declined to be a part of the group that seeks money during celebrations and festivals.

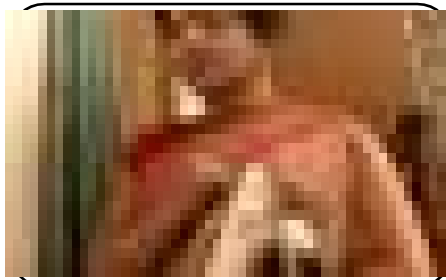
Now a government officer, she reiterated that being a transgender is no less than a curse in this country where the third gender has no social acceptance.

Thanking the Madhya Pradesh government for having offered her the platform to live a respectable life, Singh conveyed a message to the transgender community saying that they should also come forward and contribute to the society while identifying and using their own talents.

She, however, underlined the need for providing more opportunities to the sidelined community. *"If the reservation can be provided to others, then why not to us?"* she asked, adding that there was a need to spread awareness in the society about transgenders.

"If the society does not accept us, we will not be able to break our barriers," she added.

In 2015, Singh came into the limelight after she and her team had vigorously campaigned against open defecation in Madhya Pradesh. Sanjana and her NGO collaborated with the MP government on Swachhta Mission and have been associated with the programme since 2014.



Chhapra Girl Calls Off Her Wedding

A bride in Bihar's Chhapra called off her wedding as the groom allegedly turned up drunk at the *mandap* or wedding dais. Rinki Kumari, in her twenties, told her family to ask the groom, Bablu Kumar, to leave as he came staggering down the path on Saturday.

"The groom was so drunk that he was unaware of his surroundings. He misbehaved on the stage, so my daughter refused to marry him." Tribhuvan Shah, the bride's father, told news agency ANI.

Relatives allege that Bablu Kumar was unable to stand or perform any ritual at the wedding held at Dumri Chapiya village and that's when the furious bride the walked off. Both the families apparently tried to persuade Rinki Kumari to return to the wedding but she firmly refused.

The villagers apparently did not let the groom's family leave until they had returned the dowry they had extracted from Rinki's parents.

In Bihar, where liquor was banned in 2016, incidents like this are not uncommon. In January, a bride in Nalanda district turned away the groom and his friends after they arrived drunk to the wedding venue. The villagers informed the local police and the groom was arrested and charged for violating prohibition.

(Courtesy NDTV)

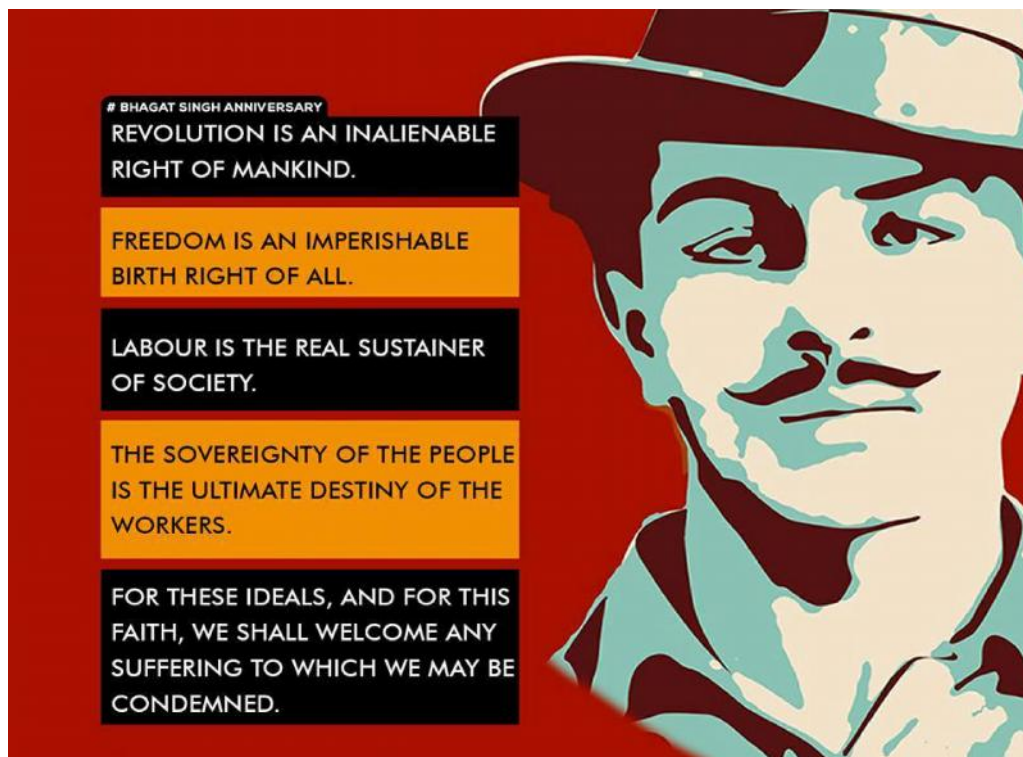
The Centenary of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

During World War I (1914–18) the British government of India had enacted a series of repressive emergency powers that were intended to combat rebellious activities. By the war's end, expectations were high among the Indians that these measures would be eased and that India would be given more political autonomy. Instead, however, the government of India passed what became known as the Rowlatt Acts in 1919, which extended the repressive wartime measures.

The Acts were met by widespread anger and discontent among Indians, notably in the Punjab region. A one-day general strike was called throughout the country. In Amritsar the news that prominent Indian leaders had been arrested and banished from that city sparked violent protests on April 10, in which soldiers fired upon civilians, buildings were looted and burned, and angry mobs killed some foreign nationals and severely beat a Christian missionary. A force of several dozen troops commanded by Brigadier General Dyer was given the task of restoring order. Among the measures taken was a ban on public gatherings.

On April 13, in the afternoon, at least 10,000 men, women, and children gathered in an open space known as the Jallianwala Bagh, which was nearly completely enclosed by walls and had only one exit. Dyer and his soldiers arrived and sealed off the exit. Without warning, the troops opened fire on the crowd, reportedly shooting hundreds of rounds until they ran out of ammunition. It is not certain how many died in the bloodbath, but, according to one official report, an estimated 379 people were killed, and about 1,200 more were wounded. After they ceased firing, the troops immediately withdrew from the place, leaving behind the dead and wounded.

The shooting was followed by the proclamation of martial law in the Punjab that included public floggings and other humiliations. Indian outrage grew as news of the shooting and subsequent British actions spread throughout the subcontinent. Rabindranath Tagore renounced the knighthood that he had received in 1915.



Postal regd. No. DL(C)-01/1199/2018-20 Delhi, Licenced to post without prepayment under
Licence No. U(C)-07/2018-20, Posted on 26-27 (Advance month) at NDPSO, ND-110001 RNI 37025/81.
(Date of Publication- 24th March 2019)



AIFAWH March to Parliament - 25 February 2019



Andhra Pradesh



Punjab

International Women's Day



National Convention of Workers - 5 March 2019

Printed by K. Hemalata and published by K.Hemalata on behalf of the AICCCWW(CITU), 13-A, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi 110 001
Ph: 011-23221306, Fax: 011-23211284, Email: aicccww@yahoo.com, Website: www.citucentre.org and
printed at Progressive Printers, A-21, Jhilmil Industrial Area, G T Road, Shahdara, Delhi-95. Editor: K.Hemalata