

The Voice of the Working Woman



MDMWFI WC Meeting

A meeting of the Working Committee of MDMWFI will be held on 23 July 2019 at BTR Bhawan, New Delhi.

AICCAW Meeting

A meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of ASHA Workers will be held on 23 July 2019 at BTR Bhawan, New Delhi.

The meeting will discuss the following agenda

1. Present situation;
2. Centre and state Reports;
3. Organisation;
4. Future Tasks

AIFAWH Working Committee Meeting

A meeting of the Working Committee of AIFAWH will be held on 25-26 July 2019 at BTR Bhawan, New Delhi.

The meeting will discuss the following agenda

1. National situation;
2. Review and Report on Activities;
3. Membership and Fund
4. 9th Conference of AIFAWH and state conferences;
5. Any other with the permission of the chair

The meeting will start at 10.30am on 25th and may continue up to late evening on 26th July.

AICCWW(CITU) General Council Tier

A meeting of the General Council tier of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) will be held on 6 August 2019, one day prior to the meeting of the CITU General Council. The meeting will be held at CITU state committee office, Bangalore, Karnataka.

The agenda is as follows:

1. Review of Activities and the implementation of decisions taken by the AICCWW(CITU) working committee tier in October and the CITU WC meeting in November 2018
2. Future tasks
3. State and national conventions
4. Any other with the permission of the chair

*The Voice
of the
Working Woman*

Monthly Journal of the AICCWW(CITU)

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Inside

	Page		Page
CITU Golden Jubilee	4	India Today	16
Unity in Power Sector	6	International	19
Women on the Move	10	Global Shift to Right	20
Workers on the Move	13	Climate Change	23
Kisans on the Move	15	Women in Textiles	26

Total pages - 28
(including cover pages)

Prepare for wider unity and heightened struggles

Prime Minister Modi extended his earlier slogan (which of course remained only a slogan during his previous tenure, by adding 'Sabka Vishwas' to old one 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas'. But the 'Sab' in Modi's dictionary probably means the 'Corporates, domestic and foreign'.

The topmost priority for the Modi 2 government was to reiterate that it would continue to work 'Corporate ke Sath', for 'Corporates' Vikas'. The first announcements the government made after returning to power were meant for maintaining 'Corporates' Vishwas'.

The day after Modi with his 57 cabinet ministers was sworn in, Rajiv Kumar, vice chairman of NITI Ayog made this clear. Modi is the chairman of NITI Ayog and Rajiv Kumar reports directly to him. According to Rajiv Kumar, 'big bang reforms' are likely to be passed within the first 100 days of Modi's second term. The reforms reported to be taken up in the first 100 days include 'labour law reforms', privatisation, creation of land banks etc.

He said 'They (foreign investors) will have reasons to be happy'. The government would focus on fully privatising or closing more than 42 state controlled companies. Arvind Panagariya, former vice chairman of NITI Ayog has already come up with the recommendation that the new government should privatise one public sector undertaking every week.

Within a few days of returning to power, it has been made clear that the priority of the government is not to make happy the ordinary citizens of this country who voted for Modi in large numbers. Forget the election rhetoric of 'nationalism' and 'patriotism'. There were terrorist attacks in Pulwama within a fortnight of Modi coming to power again. Many of our jawans were killed in terrorist attacks. But now Modi does not find any reason to talk about these. Elections are over.

The government is excited that it got another chance to serve the foreign investors, and of course, also the big domestic corporates – all those who invested heavily on Modi and his BJP in the elections. The people who voted can be befooled with words; but those who invested will be satisfied only with concrete deeds.

It has totally ignored the voice of the entire trade union movement which has been strongly opposing privatisation. It is going ahead with amending the labour laws to deprive the existing rights and benefits of the workers. The direction of his government, has already started creating 'avishwas' among the working class

It will not be long before the working class will have to join together in united struggles to protect itself from these onslaughts. The large sections of workers, who nurtured illusions about Modi, who were lured into setting aside their own day to day livelihood issues – unemployment, wages and working conditions – and voted for Modi believing that he would protect the nation will soon realise the true colours of the government. It is the responsibility of the working class, particularly, the class oriented trade union like the CITU, to create the awareness by reaching the workers at the grass root level and linking their day to day issues with the policies of the government and exposing the Modi government's politics.

The working class must be prepared for wider unity and heightened struggles.

100 Years of Struggle & Sacrifice 50 Years of Fight for Unity of the Working Class CITU Golden Jubilee

The yearlong Golden Jubilee celebration of the foundation of CITU was inaugurated on 30 May at Mavlankar Auditorium in New Delhi with specially composed song for the occasion by Jasbinder Kaur of Punjab and staging of famous street play 'Machine' by Jan Natya Manch. All office bearers and activists working at CITU Centre; AIKS general secretary Hannan Mollah, Vikram Singh of AIAWU, Punyavati of AIDWA, SFI general secretary Mayukh Biswas; CITU state leaders and activists of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan participated.

CITU president Hemalata, its vice president A. K. Padmanabhan, AIKS general secretary Hannan Mollah and CITU general secretary Tapan Sen addressed the meeting, Hemalata inaugurating and Tapan Sen concluding.

In their speeches, the speakers pointed out that in its Golden Jubilee year, CITU is celebrating centenary of the foundation of the first Central Trade Union in India; the working class struggle and sacrifices under it along with the national independence movement, which CITU inherited; struggle against reformism; 50 years of the Foundation CITU going forward successfully with efforts of unity and struggle; workers-peasants unity; the class perspective and class objective of the working class emancipation and establishing socialism which CITU has enshrined in its constitution; hence, CITU's clarion call in Golden Jubilee year - *100 years of Struggles and Sacrifices; - 50 years of Fight for Class Unity* – which are embedded in the history of the working class movement in India.

In conclusion, Tapan Sen presented CITU's statement for yearlong celebration with concrete Tasks and Activities.

For the Year Long Observation of 50 Years of CITU's Foundation

CITU will complete 50 years in 2020 since its formation in 1970 with a call for 'Unity and Struggle'. This marks the unrelenting struggle against reformism within the trade union movement upholding the ideal of socialism and internationalism to end all kinds of exploitations continuing uncompromising class struggle by forging a strong worker-peasant alliance.

The Year Long observance of 50th Year of CITU's foundation starting from 30 May 2019 has to be conceived, realised and implemented in the basic premise of CITU's call for "Reaching the Unreached", "Linking the issues facing the working class and the people with the policy regime" and "Exposing the politics that determine and promote the policy regime" in order to unify the toiling people in entirety in the forthcoming intensified struggles 'to change the policies' which is going to be tremendously challenging. This is the urgent need of the hour to combat the aggressive onslaught of the rightwing political regime on the people, on the national economy, on the democracy and democratic institutions and on the unity of the people and the society at large. And in order to effectively implement this call, the entire CITU and its primary workplace level unit committees in particular need to be educated, equipped and activated as leaders of the working people.

The beginning of Golden Jubilee observance of CITU's foundation coincides with the beginning of the centenary year of first ever National Trade Union Centre in the country –the AITUC, the legacy of the anti colonial struggles of which we are taking ahead. Therefore CITU's observance of its 50 years of foundation carries with it the rich legacy of the 100 years of working class movement of which the founders of CITU were integral and inseparable entities.

On this historic occasion, let us pledge to take up these tasks....

- Strengthen CITU and develop the organisation as a strong militant force of the working class of India towards meeting its constitutional objectives
- To heighten and strengthen the consciousness throughout the organisation and among the mass of the toiling people on the premise of internationalism, anti-imperialism, against all kinds of exploitations and repression, economic, social and political
- Strengthen and widen unity of the working class upto the workplace/ factory level; intensify joint and independent struggles aimed at reversing and defeating the neoliberal agenda
- To heighten the ongoing united struggle against anti-people and anti-national policy regime: Take the lead in unifying the people's movement
- To intensify the struggle against all kinds of social oppression from the class platform
- Cultural intervention in daily life of workers/people to promote scientific thinking, working class values and social harmony
- Focus on political ideological development of CITU cadres and activists; Special focus on developing young and women cadres
- Develop and strengthen joint actions of the workers and peasants at the national/state/ district/ local level
- Special initiative of independent followed by joint campaign on the most crucial issue of "unemployment", "employment generation", "quality of employment and employment relations".
- Strengthen solidarity actions – towards workers' struggles in other industries, struggles of other sections of toiling people, international solidarity

Activities:

- Use every programme and action of CITU at all levels to put into practice CITU Call: 'Reach the Unreached' and 'Link Issues with Policies; Expose Politics that Determine the Policies'
- Activate the lowest level committees of CITU – the union committees
- Workshops and trade union classes, starting from CITU secretariat up to the lowest level of the organisation – union committees – on Kozhikode document on organisation and the tasks before CITU in the present economic and political situation
- Intensify propaganda activities through publication of literature, increase efforts for self education and encourage use of innovative and modern technology for education
- Membership enrolment for 2019 to be taken up as a specific task by all affiliated unions, industrial federations and committees of CITU, fixing a definite time frame; focus on renewing all existing members and increasing membership in all sectors and all states; target of 1 crore membership to be achieved in 2020, by the end of the Golden jubilee celebrations;
- Identify at least 50 activists from different sectors/ districts in the state and focussed efforts to develop their political ideological understanding and organisational abilities; special attention to develop cadres from among women and socially oppressed sections of the working class
- All state committees to identify and prioritise at least one key sector for organisation and concentrate on it by allotting required resources – human and financial
- All state committees to achieve financial stability and self sufficiency to be in a position to take up all the necessary activities for expansion and consolidation, to reach the unreached and publishing necessary literature linking up issues with policies and exposing politics that determine policies.
- Be vigilant to protect unity of the working class and the people in general; actively intervene whenever attempts are made to disrupt such unity by whatever forces including the communal and divisive forces of various hues
- Formation of cultural groups in every state

Fifty Years of Fight for Unity of the Working Class

Prasanta N Chowdhury

[During the Golden Jubilee year of CITU : 30 May, 2019 – 30 May, 2020, The Working Class has undertaken collection and publication of sectorwise write ups on 50 years 'Fight for the Working Class Unity'. The fight for workers unity in Electricity Sector is being published in this issue. – Editor]

On the Fight for Unity of the Working Class; CITU president B. T. Ranadive in his concluding speech in CITU's foundation conference on 30 May, 1970 in Kolkata had said, *"The Struggle for unity is a serious struggle, it has to be carried on with the great precision, with great confidence and in the bargain and in the process, the forces of disruption have to be isolated. Only then, our organisation can really develop the fighting strength of the working class and can be an effective organ of the struggle to defend the working class and can be an effective organ to develop its consciousness further so that it can discharge its political obligations which history has placed on it."*

Underlining the importance of struggle for class unity, CITU's Kozhikode organisational document noted, *"Uniting the working class, broadening and heightening struggles, and raising the consciousness of workers to make them recognise their real enemies as well as the root cause of their distress in the system and in the polity are the most important and urgent tasks for us today."*

Electricity for Progress

Power sector is directly related to the progress and for protecting the interests of all electricity consumers - domestic, agricultural, commercial, industrial as well power sector workers, employees and engineers. But, in colonial India, Electricity Act 1910 was enacted mainly to give legal support to private power companies, who were operating in township for profit earning, to lay the distribution system without any hurdle from land owners and other people. Electricity was not for wide use for developmental, domestic or commercial activities for the people. At the time of independence, total installed capacity in the whole country was only about 1360 MW with insignificant number of personnel engaged in the operation and maintenance work. As such, no trade union movement worth its name existed.

After independence, a comprehensive plan was made to develop power projects in different parts of the country, depending on available resources, and to integrate those under a common national grid. Electrical power is essential for infrastructural development in agriculture, industry, services and also for other infrastructural development.

In the early days after independence, there was lack of financial capability of domestic private capital for huge investment required in developing the infrastructures, especially in power sector. Hence, the government took the responsibility of developing electric power and, with this objective, enacted Electricity Supply Act, 1948 bringing electricity under public sector. After 1956, state electricity boards (SEBs) were formed in most of the states separating from direct government departments. Even now in some states electricity is under state governments' departments.

Unionisation of Power Workers

Though, early workers in electricity boards took initiative to form trade unions in most of the states, but they were reluctant to affiliate these unions with the central trade unions, a lingering-effect of past government employees. Many unions elected political leaders as their top office bearers under illusion to influence government's decision. Some unions elected lawyers as leaders hoping to get easy relief through legal course. Some workers formed category-wise and caste-wise unions. All these unions did not think of the workers united organized might in collective bargaining. Reformist trade union leaders

and the managements encouraged this style of functioning. In such a situation workers of the industry together could not exert pressure on the managements.

But, gradually workers changed their attitude; started getting organized in unions relying on workers united might and using striking power; and got the unions affiliated to the central trade unions by the second half of 60s. The formation of All India Federation of Electricity Employees (AIFEE) in 1966 is the result of such a changed attitude of the workers.

However, formation of AIFEE did not help much. AITUC started pursuing their policy of collaboration with the government. They advised the workers to adopt legal means, peaceful ways and without obstructing the capitalist development of the country. As members of the regional committees of the first national labour commission, they did not oppose the government policy of using Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) against the striking workers.

After the 3rd Five Year Plan, the government, facing economic crisis, started curtailing the benefits of workers and employees; ruthlessly suppressed government employees' strike in September 1968 who were demanding wage hike based on need based minimum wage. They dismissed many of the leaders of the central government employees' movement and shot down number of striking workers in Pathankot, Bikaner and Indraprastha. The then national trade union federations including AITUC did not come out for the rescue of these government employees.

The respective state governments, led by national or state bourgeois parties, stood with the central government to suppress the strike. Only the Left government of Kerala helped the striking workers and did not use ESMA, declared by the Government of India.

Struggle of Power Workers

After the formation of CITU, several unions in central, state and private power utilities became affiliated to it. In some of states, some unions were ideologically closer to CITU, but were not formally affiliated. Some of those remained with the state government employees' federation.

The electricity workers in Kerala started agitations in late fifties and sixties demanding regularization of jobs of temporary workers and pay hikes for temporary and permanent workers. All these unions were category-wise unions. They did not go for indefinite strike. Only temporary and casual workers went on indefinite strike many times with the support of the Left parties and solidarity actions by militant trade unions. And, many demands were won by them.

In states like Assam, Bihar, Tamilnadu and West Bengal also such struggles in the electricity industry developed. In Tamilnadu thousands of temporary workers' jobs were regularized through prolonged agitations and strikes. In Assam, West Bengal and Kerala, engineers also went on strike. In Kerala a strike of the graduate engineers of the electricity board continued for 65 days. The union, led by AITUC, opposed the strike. At that time, the state government, supported by CPI leader and CPI's electricity minister, banned the strike and referred the issue to the industrial tribunal. K. O. Habeeb was the convener of the action council. CITU supported the strike and twice organised statewide strikes in support of the engineers' strike. In Orissa, through struggles, system of casual workers was abolished in 1971-72. In Kerala also casual and NMR system were abolished through agreements signed by CITU and other unions in 1972. In West Bengal, muster roll, work charged, ad-hoc and ex-cadre system of engagement continued till LF Govt came to power in 1977 and abolished all.

Electricity unions of Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal were affiliated to CITU. On 17-18 August, 1973, union labour minister convened a conference to discuss the issues of electricity workers. Habeeb, Janakiraman and Sukhamoy Pal took part on behalf of CITU. As suggested by the union labour minister Raghunath Reddy, Central Wage Guide Line Committee was constituted. The Committee recommended a wage and dearness allowance formula. On 19-20 October, 1974 a convention of electricity workers

took place in Delhi. Wage formulation was one of the main agenda of the convention. In June, 1975 internal emergency was declared and all forms of democratic movement was banned.

Formation and Expansion of EEFI

Going through the process of series of struggles and sacrifices and on CITU's line, Electricity Employees Federation of India (EEFI) was founded on 13-15 January, 1984 in a national convention in Trivandrum. The convention had the valued guidance of B. T. Ranadive. E. Balanandan and D. Janakiraman were elected as president and general secretary. Many unions of electricity workers, not affiliated to CITU, are affiliated in EEFI and are comfortably functioning in it. This bondage of unity for class struggle added immense strength. 22 Unions from 15 states took affiliation of EEFI at its very inception.

Neoliberal Attacks

In 1991, Government of India adopted the policy of neoliberal economy as the path of development. Private capital was invited in electricity industry. SEBs was unbundled by Electricity Act, 2003 to serve the interests of the private profiteers. EEFI independently and in the joint platform of NCCOEEE (National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers) launched heroic struggles to combat the challenge of privatisation.

EEFI grew stronger during this period of thirty five years, both organisationally by effective intervention on various issues across the country. It expanded in new areas, new states, new utilities and among new sections of industry and within both regular and contractor workers. EEFI activities have increased in terms of the types of the issues addressed, the places and sections in which they are conducted and the number of workers participating in them. EEFI is today recognised by electricity workers all over the country as the most militant fighting organisation of the electricity workers. At present EEFI has 45 affiliated unions from 22 states and UTs covering both regular, contract, casual and daily rated workers of both public and private sectors.

NCCOEEE & Its Struggle

Directed by BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, Electricity Bill, 2000 was drafted by National Council of Applied Economic Research with object, as mentioned, to nullify all existing laws applicable for power sector in order to attract investment in power sector from private foreign capitalists on the pretext of competition. The main goal was for privatisation of SEBs annulling the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948.

Government of India suppressed the fact of economic advancement of the country due to commendable performance of SEBs. SEBs added generating capacity over 70 times since independence; increased rural electrification from 1,500 to 5 lakhs villages and energisation of 1.2 crores pump-sets contributing towards growth of food production making a starving country to food surplus one. Following economic growth, demand for electricity went up. Now, the Government thought to invite profit greedy private capitalists in this sector. For obvious reason, they focused on accumulated loss of Rs.26,000 crores during 5 decades!

Outline of the draft of the electricity Bill, 2000 was placed in power ministers' conference in New Delhi in February, 2000. The proposed Bill, once enacted, would have curbed the independence of the country and stall all developments in technology, manufacturing as well indigenous production system. It would have stopped employment generation in all sectors like infrastructure, agriculture, commerce and industry. All national level trade unions and organisations of engineers and officers in electricity sector assembled in a convention in Jaipur on 30 April, 2000. E. Balanandan and A. B. Bardhan, legendary leaders of power sector workers, took part in this convention. They formed a very broad based platform as National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers (NCCOEEE) to fight back the Bill by the electricity employees and engineers and involving wider section of people to oppose the game plan of the NDA government to convert electricity from a service for the socio-economic development of the country to a market driven commodity. CITU central office assigned a national centre for this historic work of EEFI.

NCCOEEE National Chapter decided to constitute Regional and State Chapters to carry out the struggle. EEFI played a pivotal role in all the states, regions and at national level. CITU leadership extended guidance and all round support for the nationwide united movement of the workers, officers and engineers in electricity.

Going beyond the agenda on electricity legislation, NCCOEEE has extended its struggle to make right to electricity as human right, to keep national energy resources as public property, equal wages for similar jobs, abolition of contract system in regular jobs and to oppose New Pension Scheme. All national federations of electricity employees and engineers are the constituents of NCCOEEE. After installation of BJP led NDA government in 2014, electricity federation affiliated to BMS has distanced itself from the united activities under NCCOEEE.

Achievement of the United Struggle

United struggle of NCCOEEE achieved notable successes with the support from left political parties during UPA-1 government which was dependent on left parties support. Clause 6 of Electricity Act, 2003 to curb the right to electricity of rural people was deleted. After deletion of this clause, Rajeev Gandhi Gramin Vaidyutikaran Yojana, largest ever project for rural electrification, was taken up with major funding by the Government of India. Anti-people clauses like abolition of cross subsidy were amended. Again, Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2014 was placed in the Parliament on 19 December, 2014. The Bill proposed splitting distribution service into 'carriage' and 'content'. In protest, there was massive March to Parliament on 8 December followed by discussion with the minister. But, the Government did not take into consideration the points raised by NCCOEEE.

In this background, power ministers' conference was held at Kochi on 6-7 November, 2015. NCCOEEE promptly organized a protest rally before the venue of the conference. All national federations of electricity employees, engineers and officers of Kerala played major role to make the protest demonstration successful. Besides Kerala, power sector leadership of Tamilnadu and of adjacent states also contributed in making the demonstration a mammoth one. All over Kerala placards, banners and festoons highlighted the anti-people features of the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2014. In this background, the Ministry of labour, Government of India, convened meeting for discussion on 5 November, 2015 at RLC office at Kochi. The meeting was fruitless.

Around 16,000 electricity employees, officers and engineers surrounded the venue of the power ministers' conference, held rally and public meeting. K. O. Habeeb presided over the meeting. Manik Dey, the then power minister of Tripura, took part in the rally and greeted the NCCOEEE for working in the interest of people of the country. Ultimately, Piyush Goyal, the union power minister invited NCCOEEE leadership for discussion. The meeting continued over 1 hour without result.

Struggle Widens

Following this, series of massive regional, state and district rallies were organised in different parts of the country with submission of memoranda to the Prime Minister opposing the government's move to curb the right to electricity for the poor people of India.

National convention of electricity workers convened by NCCOEEE on 8 June, 2018 decided nationwide power strike on 7 December, 2018. But, later, in view of proposed countrywide workers general strike on 8-9 January, 2019, 7 December power workers strike was deferred.

Government's Move Stalled

Due to vibrant united struggle of power workers, despite serious attempts through five years, Government could not enact the 2014 Bill except introducing a new Bill as Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2018.

(Prasanta N Choudhury is General Secretary of EEFI, Convener of NCCOEEE & President of TUI, Energy of WFTU)

7th State Conference of Assam Rajyik Anganwadi Karmi evam Sahayika Santha

7TH State conference of Assam Rajyik Anganwadi Karmi evam Sahayika Santha was held on 8 , 9 & 10 June 2019 at Mangaldoi, Darrang district, Assam .

The conference started with public meeting at Gandhi maidan, a public field of the locality on 8th morning. The meeting was presided over by Dr Rama Kanta Bora . Around three thousand workers and helpers of Darrang & Odalguri district assembled in the meeting . The meeting was inaugurated by Usha Rani ,President ,AIFAWH. Tapan Sarma State General secretary of CITU, Indira Newar State Secretary of ARAKSS and Puspalata Das, former secretary of ARAKSS .

On 8th June evening, the delegate session began with the flag hoisting by Niroda Kakati state President of ARAKSS. Usharani inaugurated the delegate session. While inaugurating the session she explained the prevailing political situation of our country after the general election in which the BJP has come to the power again with much more majority. The coming days will be difficult for the working people as well as the Anganwadi workers helpers, she said. She appealed to the employees to be ready for a tough fight to restore democracy and also to achieve our demands.



Total membership of ARAKSS for the year 2018 gone up to 40098 from 32400 last year . On the basis of this membership 274 delegates attended the Conference from 23 districts and 230 blocks. Total 32 delegates participated in deliberations on the General Secretary's report placed by Comrade Indira Newar. After the discussion it was resolved

to participate in more number in the programmes and struggles of CITU in the coming days.

The conference unanimously elected 21 Member Office bearers with Niroda Kakati as Working President , Jaymati Das as the President, Indira Newar as the General Secretary, Ratna Sur as Treasurer and Mira Pathak as the Deputy Treasurer. Bina Baishya, Mina Mech Dolimaina Chaudhary, Renu Devi Niru Gohai, Lalita kalita , Junu Chetia , Anjali Chaudhary, Jamila Khatun, Jonaki Das , Ranjuma are the other office bearers. The conference also elected 46 delegates to the All India Conference of AIFAWH to be held in September 2019.

Biren Sarma , Bobekananda Adhikary, Madan Talukdar from CITU State Committee attended the conference.

The reception committee headed by prominent Doctor Rama Kanta Bora ,as the chairman and Bhagya lata Baruah as Secretary and Prema Hazarika as Treasurer with a big team of workers and helpers of Darrang and Odalguri district extending tremendous services for successful holding of the conference. They have also organized a Cultural Function and also published a Souvenir.

Karnataka Anganwadi Workers Protest Against Opening of Pre- Schools

On Thursday, more than 5,000 Anganwadi workers from across Karnataka gathered in Bengaluru to protest against the government's decision to start lower and upper kindergarten classes (LKG and UKG) in Karnataka Public Schools.

The government in its order said, "4,100 Anganwadi centres under the department of women and child development would be shifted to premises of government primary schools and they will be developed under 'Bala Snehi Kendras'." However, there is no mention of whether Anganwadi workers will be appointed for the jobs in schools.

S Varalakshmi, president of Karnataka State Anganwadi Workers' said, "We protested because the government is planning to merge LKG and UKG to Karnataka Public Schools. What will happen to the Anganwadi workers and where will they go?"

Without having a holistic approach and plan, just opening pre- school in schools will jeopardize the development of the children. Only ICDS is having a comprehensive integrated approach to the development of the children which will not be possible in government schools.

Following the protest, Women and Child Development Minister Jayamala assured the protesters that she will lead a delegation to talk about the issue.

ASHA Workers' Demonstrate in Mumbai

Maharashtra State Asha Workers Gatpravartak (B.F.) employees joint action committee held a massive demonstration at Azad Maidan Mumbai on 4th June 2019 on their long pending demands against BJP-Shivsena government. Earlier ASHA workers' unions held demonstration on 23rd January 2019 and the Finance and Health ministers held discussions joint action committee on 6th February 2019 and assured to look into the demands of Asha's and B.F. But the government failed to settle the issue



before parliament election. The delegation of committee held two rounds of discussions, once with Finance Minister followed by one with health Minister. The joint action committee rejected the proposal of state government because government was only assuring to provide matching amount of incentives of central government contribution.

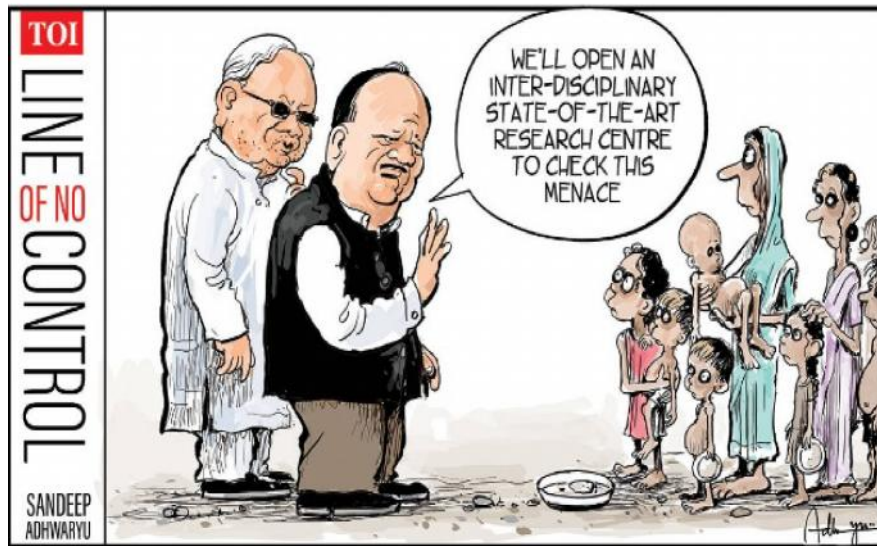
The joint action committee of ASHA Workers unions in Maharashtra formed a broader platform creating a joint front involving nurses, pharmacists, doctors and Jana Swastha Abhiyan in defense of health service and health rights of the people. The issues of availability of medicine at primary health centers, filling up of vacancies, taxes on medical equipment etc. are also raised by the platform.

In Maharashtra 60759 ASHA workers are engaged in rural areas while 8576 work in urban areas. Total 69335 ASHA Workers and 3510 B.F are working in the state. The average incentives of ASHA workers is just Rs. 3000/-per month including the additional Rs.1000 since October 2018.

Maharashtra Asha Gatpravartak Federation (MAGF -CITU) is demanding the implementation of recommendations of 45th ILC, with fixed minimum wages to Ashas. Immediately, the MAGF demands from the state government, to ensure Rs 10,000/- per month for ASHA workers and Rs 15000/- to B.F. as remuneration, pending regularization.

Further on 4th June the delegation met Health Minister and demanded to ensure govt. notification during budget session starting from 19th June. We also met Health Minister on 14th of June to pursue our demands. If state government fails to make budgetary provision and does not notify necessary orders, the JAC has decided to go on indefinite Dharna-demonstration at Mumbai and in all the districts of Maharashtra from July 2019 onwards.

Children Dying from Encephalitis in Muzzaffarpur



Over 114 children, almost all of them below 10, have died this year, till now, as we go to the press, from what is medically known as acute encephalitis syndrome (AES). Their symptoms are the same - a high fever followed by seizures. Between 2000 and 2010, over 1,000 children in the district succumbed to this infection, which leads to swelling in the brain. Experts say a deadly cocktail of malnourishment, heat wave and poor living conditions are to be blamed for the high death toll this year. The cure could have been as simple as timely administration of glucose. Poverty and malnutrition are the basic cause of the illness, and death is primarily due to inadequate medical care.

The children dying from AES belong to the poorest of the poor — the Mahadalit community, including Musahar and scheduled castes, and minority community — and all of them were malnourished.

It is shocking that the Bihar state health minister Mangal Pandey said that the death of these children was 'not a big issue'.

Dr. Harshvardhan, the Union Health Minister, visited Muzzaffarpur and announced a number of measures, including opening more hospitals. These are the very same promises he had made in 2014, when there was an outbreak of the same disease that took the lives of many children. It is evident that not one of these measures was implemented in these 5 years.

Chennai Metro Rail Workers Strike - Dismissed Worker Reinstated

250 permanent employees on Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), the joint venture company of Central and Tamilnadu State governments, on instant issues of withdrawal of all allowances, lower pay fitment and withdrawal of existing leave facilities staged 10 days long protest sit-in before CMRL head quarter. Management did not respond. The workers then contacted CITU and formed CMRL Employees Union in a general body meeting on 5 August, 2018, elected CITU state president A Soundararajan as its president, DREU vice president R Elangovan as its vice president and seven other office bearers from amongst them; and got it affiliated to CITU.

The newly formed union made several representations, mass deputation to the management without any response. In November 2018, management attempted to outsource the post of station controllers. Soundararajan wrote to the management drawing their attention to Madras High Court's order of recruitment of 100 empanelled candidates first; and not to outsource the post failing which it would be contempt of court. Enraged management suspended all 7 office bearers in the company on 3 December.

The union served strike notice on 24 January; labour commissioner admitted the dispute in conciliation and advised status quo pending conciliation. On 23 April state labour commissioner advised the union to seek remedy from CLC (Centre). The strike notice then was served to CLC(C). CLC(C) asked the union to seek remedy from state labour commissioner. The union then moved petition in Madras High Court on 26 April to decide about the appropriate government and for interim stay prohibiting any action against any employee. On 29 April, the Court issued order of status quo. However, by that time, CMRL management issued summary dismissal order to all seven office bearers.

Workers went to the MD in a mass deputation and, on his refusal to meet, sat in daylong protest dharna and went on total strike. Three employees who were in central control room were confined and beaten by management goons and were rescued with police help. An FIR has been filed. They were suspended.

Taking suo moto notice, the state labour commissioner convened a conciliation meeting and held that management's actions of suspension and dismissals of the employees during the pendency of conciliation and without approval of the conciliation officer are illegal. The conciliation meeting failed and strike continued.

CMRL management faced hurdles in running of the trains despite operating it by outsourced employees. The strike was widely being reported in the media. The management brought manpower from Bangalore. On 1 May, understanding was arrived at in conciliation meeting. Face-saving formula were evolved out that dismissed employees would 'appeal' for reinstatement, management assured no further disciplinary action against them on joining duties; enquiry would continue against separately suspended three employees; and rest of the disputes would be pursued in the conciliation. Later, the general body meeting of the union decided to call off the strike.

On 2 May, seven union office bearer employees submitted their appeal and have resumed duties.

Background

Though in public sector, CMRL runs like a profiteering private corporate under the present Central and State dispensations.

CMRL does not have any registered standing order under Industrial Employment (Standing Order) Act. Instead, it has an arbitrary private 'H.R. Manual' framed by its board with provision that M.D. can modify or change it or insert any rule.

Initially these 250 permanent employees were posted as train operators, station controllers, traffic controllers, junior engineers, technicians etc. Rest of the categories are outsourced. There are 600 contract employees engaged as sweepers and cleaners, ticketing staff, security staff and helpers under various departments. Initially the permanent employees were running the trains as train operators. They are now replaced by 170 outsourced employees. At present all the drivers or train operators are contract

employees. The contract employees do not get minimum wage, working conditions are worst and the provisions of all labour laws are denied to them. The contract workers do not have a union for fear of retrenchment.

The permanent employees of CMRL, like in other Metro rails, are given second pay revision committee's pay structure. They are entitled for a 35% cafeteria allowance, which is an umbrella allowance covering transportation, health, children education etc. They were also entitled to leave facilities including half pay leave and paternity leave. Third pay revision committee recommended uniform fitment benefit of 15% of basic pay for both executives and non executives and continuation of 35% cafeteria allowance effective from 1 January, 2017.

CMRL management implemented the third pay revision committee's recommendation after 18 months delay on 30 June 2018; but while granting 15% fitment benefit to executives, reduced to 10% to non-executives. Cafeteria allowance has been reduced to 20% for executives, but completely withdrawn for non-executives with retrospective effect. As a result, entire cafeteria allowance amounts, paid in last 18 months, have been recovered. Management also withdrew the paternity leave and half pay leave, already being enjoyed by them.

The management also increased longer working hours of the station controllers in two shifts refusing to convert it in three shifts; and also refused to provide cab facilities or rest room at the station.

CITU Leader Arrested for Protecting Workers

The management of Hawashi, a subsidiary of South Korean auto company Hyundai, and hundreds of policemen led by an additional DSP, jointly raided the premises of Shovel India Ltd at Kanchipuram at the midnight of 19 May and arrested CITU district leaders, secretary E. Muthukumar and S. Kannan, and all the workers who were staying inside the factory protecting the machines from being forcibly removed by the management of Hawashi. Muthukumar was sent to jail and was later released on bail. The arrested workers were released from police custody next day.

Shovel manufactures car glasses for Hawashi. It employs 151 permanent workers and 30 other workers. Since March, 2019 the South Korean managing director Choi yongsuk, is absconding leaving behind substantial debt burden, statutory outstanding and workers dues including Rs.26 crore as GST arrears; Rs.34 crores on account of workers PF dues, 6 months due wages and canteen dues; Rs.30 crore to private lender. Yet, the workers voluntarily involved themselves in the production process in shifts and managed the activities in the factory to save their jobs and the company.

But, Hawashi management wanted to remove all machineries and equipments from the Shovel company premises. The workers and the union objected and resisted all such attempts. CITU raised disputes on workers' wages which is admitted in conciliation. On 28 April a MOU was signed between the Hawashi management and the union led by CITU before the DLC that the production would not be stopped in Shovel till the managing director returns.

But same day, at the instance of Hyundai, the management filed petition before the court for police protection, due to the alleged threat of CITU leadership and the workers, and to help the management to remove machineries from Shovel factory. The biased court did not even hear the union and, on very next day, issued order in favour of the management charging CITU leaders and the workers of criminal actions and directed police under an additional DSP to oversee the removal of machineries.

The government and the court did not even care to take notice of the absconding foreigner Shovel managing director, a Hyundai accomplice; the huge government and statutory outstanding and workers arrears and issued order in dismantling a factory; and took action against the starving workers who were demanding their wage arrears and protection of their jobs, machines and the company.

This is a classic example of anti-labour policies of Tamilnadu government; and the nexus of government, police, labour authorities and the court to defend the multinational company and its exploitative policies against the workers.

(Inputs: K. C. Gopikumar)

Thousands of Maharashtra Farmers Flay Government on Burning Issues

At the call of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) Maharashtra state council, thousands of farmers came on to the streets in several districts on June 1, just two days after the newly elected BJP regime of Narendra Modi at the centre took office. The statewide protests flayed the state government of the BJP-Shiv Sena for its betrayal of promises given to farmers on issues of drought relief, loan waiver, fair prices, land rights, ration, pension and other local issues, which included opposition to the proposed Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train and the proposed Mumbai-Vadodara Expressway in Palghar district.

June 1 marked the second anniversary of the historic 11-day statewide farmers strike in Maharashtra that began on June 1, 2017. It may be recalled that it was this novel strike that forced the BJP-led state government to declare a Rs 34,000 crore loan waiver package. However, only Rs 18,000 crore of this package has been disbursed to farmers, by the government's own admission. The AIKS, along with other farmers' bodies, had played a vital role in the success of that strike. AIKS state general secretary Ajit Nawale was the convenor of the Coordination Committee of Farmers Organisations that led the strike.



It was against the non-implementation of the demands conceded then that the AIKS in Maharashtra led the unprecedented Kisan Long March from Nashik to Mumbai from March 6 to 12, 2018. Over 40,000 peasants marched a

distance of nearly 200 kilometres for seven days and forced the state government to give written assurances and place them officially before both houses of the state legislature.

When the BJP-led state government again reneged on many of these promises, the AIKS began another huge Kisan Long March from Nashik on February 20, 2019, on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections. The nervous government again had to bend within two days on February 21.

In the June 1 actions, the largest mobilisation of over 10,000 peasants was in the eight tehsils of Thane-Palghar districts, viz Dahanu, Talasari, Vikramgad, Jawhar, Mokhada, Wada, Shahapur and Palghar. There were impressive rallies at Akole in Ahmednagar district, Kinwat in Nanded district, Solapur in Solapur district and several other districts in the state like Parbhani, Beed, Hingoli, Latur, Usmanabad, Buldana, Sangli, Kolhapur, Nashik and others. Demonstrations and dharnas took place in all the eight districts of Marathwada region, which is the worst affected by drought. Memorandums were given to government officials, who were forced to concede several local demands.

The decision to hold these statewide protests on June 1 was taken in the meeting of the AIKS Maharashtra state council held on May 5, 2019 (culmination of the Karl Marx Bicentenary Year) at Parali Vajinath in Beed district of the severely drought-hit Marathwada region.

The AIKS state council will meet on June 22 to plan further mass actions.

Freedom of Speech in India

The arrest of freelance journalist Prashant Kanojia has triggered massive outrage on social media and the Editors Guild

Kanojia was picked up by the UP Police on 8 June, for a social media post on Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath. He had shared a video of a woman who claimed that she had been video-calling the chief minister and that she wanted to marry him.

This is just one of many such incidents in recent times.

Television journalist Kishorechandra Wangkhem was charged with uploading a video on social media calling Biren Singha, the chief minister of Manipur state, a “puppet” of the central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The reporter was arrested on Nov. 27 2017 under the National Security Act and sentenced to a year in prison. The journalist was jailed just days after international free press watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) called India a dangerous place for the media, in a report rounding up the numbers of journalists killed, held hostage or who had gone missing till December 2018.

Chhattisgarh has been one of several major flashpoints. Arrests, death threats and even alleged torture of journalists, human rights activists and lawyers by agencies of the central Indian state created what an international report called a “near total information blackout”. According to the report, 54 journalists have come under attack through 2016 and the first quarter of 2017. The actual number is probably much more, if a revelation by the minister of state for home affairs that there were 142 journalist deaths during 2014-15 is anything to go by.

In Kashmir, after Burhan Wani’s killing, the media was harassed and censored, with two of the largest newspaper offices raided and printing presses shut down. The *Kashmir Reader*, which was doing on ground reporting of the situation in the Valley found itself labelled anti-national and banned for three months.

NDTV came under fire for its coverage of the Pathankot operation which allegedly revealed strategic secrets. It was handed a 24-hour ban by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which was later overturned by the Supreme Court.

The internet was shut down 31 times in India in 2016, 79 times in 2017 and 100 times in 2018. These internet shutdowns take place under Section 14 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), despite questions of the constitutional validity of such actions and who the power lies with.

In the 2017 World Press Freedom Index, India sank three places to position 136 (“least free”). The 2017 India Freedom Report by The Hoot, an International media watchdog, spoke of “an overall sense of shrinking liberty not experienced in recent years”. It counted 54 reported attacks on journalists, at least three cases of television news channels being banned, and 45 sedition cases against individuals and groups between January 2016 and April 2017.

The Hoot has found that the perpetrators of this kind of violence are usually politicians in power, vigilante groups, police and security forces, and sometimes mafia and criminal groups. But with the kind of influence they wield, the sponsors of this violence as well as their goons get away scot-free most of the time, even when their identities are known.

(Inputs from the internet)

Crimes Against Minor Girls on the Rise

A two-year-old was allegedly kidnapped from outside her house on May 30 and her body was disposed of in a garbage dump. The body was found three days later, by which time it had decomposed and animals had mutilated it.

The motive is suspected to be a monetary dispute over a loan between one of the accused and the girl's grandfather.

One of the accomplices in the alleged murder of the minor has a criminal record of allegedly raping his seven-year-old daughter. He was out on bail. According to police, the accused had a total of four previous cases pending against him — filed under various IPC sections, including 376 (rape), 354 (assault with intention to outrage modesty of a woman) and 363 (kidnapping).

The family has also alleged the girl was raped, however, the police have so far maintained the post-mortem report does not corroborate it.

Crime against minor girls is on the rise with half a dozen rape cases of minors reported in Uttar Pradesh and several in Madhya Pradesh, in just one week. The cases of crime against minors reported in Uttar Pradesh include a 12-year-old Dalit girl who was allegedly raped by six men in Kushinagar district of the state, a 15-year-old allegedly raped by a teacher inside a seminary in Kanpur. The body of a 7-year-old girl was found in the bushes outside Bijbaha village of Jalaun in UP on June 9. Again on June 14, a seven-year-old girl was allegedly kidnapped from outside her residence in a village under Sikriganj police station in Gorakhpur district before being raped and murdered by a 48-year-old man.

In Madhya Pradesh, a 10-year-old girl who went missing from a slum in Bhopal on June 8th night was raped and murdered. In another case in MP, a four-year-old girl in a village in Jabalpur district was allegedly sexually assaulted by a 16-year-old boy.

In Tripura, a girl studying in std. 1 was raped and murdered near Halflong Tea Garden on June 17 night.

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Left Youth Leader in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu Killed by Casteist Fanatics



An activist of the left-wing Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) was murdered by casteist fanatics on Wednesday night (12 June 2019) in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. 23 year-old Ashok, the Tirunelveli district treasurer of the DYFI, was returning from work when he was hacked to death at Karaiyiruppu village near Thachanallur.

The family members of Ashok, who belonged to a Dalit community, along with DYFI activists and several fellow villagers, blocked the Tirunelveli-Madurai highway in protest, demanding immediate arrest of the culprits.

Ashok used to work in a tyre-manufacturing unit at an industrial estate run by the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) in Gangaikondan. The murderers attacked him as he was walking home around 10.45 pm. They hacked him to death and threw his body in the bushes near the railway track.

People belonging to the Dalit community in the region have to pass through a settlement belonging to the dominant maravar caste to reach the fields where they work. According to reports, some people from the maravar community had been abusing Dalit workers and women – most of whom are agricultural workers – as they passed through this route. Some youth, including Ashok, asked the harassers to stop their casteist abuse. Subsequently there was an attack on Ashok and his mother last month as they were returning home from the fields, allegedly by a few persons belonging to the group of harassers. Ashok tried to file a case under the SC/ST Atrocities Act, but the Thachanallur police only filed a case under other sections.

DYFI activists say that the murder of Ashok is in response to the role that he played in the resistance against the abuse of Dalit workers and women by reactionary elements of the dominant community, as he mobilised youth to fight caste oppression and discrimination in his village.

“Comrade Ashok was in the forefront of the fight against the casteist forces with conviction,” said a statement by the DYFI’s Central Executive Committee. The murder of Ashok is revenge by the casteist forces, for his fight for equality, the statement said. “There has been criminal negligence on the part of the police.”

The DYFI has demanded immediate arrest of the accused, time-bound investigation and justice in the case, along with strict action against the police officers who did not act on Ashok’s complaint. The organisation has also demanded that the SC/ST Atrocities Act should be included while filing the case.

The DYFI held a nation-wide protest on 15 June.

Women in Switzerland Rise Up to Demand Equal Pay

Several hundred thousand purple-clad protesters blowing whistles, banging pots and pans and brandishing feminist slogans filled the streets of Swiss towns and cities on 14 June 2019 as women across the country went on strike for equal pay.

"I love badass women" and *"Eliminate the patriarchy"* figured among the messages on posters and banners, as women vented their frustration with persistent gender discrimination and wage gaps in the wealthy Alpine nation.

"June 14, 2019, enters the recent history of Switzerland as the biggest political event. Considering the whole day, several hundred thousand women took part in actions, strikes and walkouts," said a statement by USS, an umbrella organisation grouping 16 Swiss unions. The action comes nearly three decades after women held the country's first nationwide strike for equal pay.

Pram marches, whistle concerts and giant picnics were planned around the country, with the day's events culminating in giant demonstrations including the capital Bern (40,000 people), Zurich (70,000), Basel (40,000) and Geneva (20,000), organisers said. In Lausanne (60,000), the cathedral was lit up in the colour purple. In Bern women filled the square in front of the government and parliament buildings. Manu Bondi, 68, joined the protest alongside her daughter and granddaughter, and two friends who demonstrated with her in 1991.

She said she was protesting *"in solidarity with all women of all ages"*. *"There are more of us this time than in 1991 and our demands are different,"* she said. *"Back then it was about abortion. Now it is above all about equal pay. It is really important that women be paid according to the work they do. It is great to see people so committed."*

The events kicked off overnight in Lausanne, with women ringing the bells of the cathedral. By morning, some 500 people gathered for a massive breakfast celebration, blocking traffic on one of the town's main bridges. In Basel they projected the clenched-fist feminist symbol onto the skyscraper headquarters of pharmaceutical giant Roche. In Geneva, protestors replaced street signs bearing men's names with women's ones. While 548 streets in Geneva Canton are named after men, only 41 have female names, according to the ATS news agency.

20 percent less

The organisers of Friday's action say things have hardly improved since the major 1991 strike, insisting women need to demand *"more time, more money, more respect"*. Women in Switzerland on average still earn 20 percent less than men. And for men and women with equal qualifications, the wage gap remains nearly eight percent, according to the national statistics office. *"Wage equality has not been achieved. That is a good reason to go on strike,"* Ruth Dreyfuss, who in 1998 became Switzerland's first female president, told broadcaster RTS on Friday.

Riding the wave of the global #MeToo movement, a new generation of women is attacking lingering discrimination, harassment, sexual abuse and wage inequality with renewed vigour. Organisers have called upon women to snub their jobs and housework for the entire day.

Women work for free

For those women unable to take a full day off, the organisers urged them to at least pack their things and leave by 3:24 pm. *"After that, women work for free,"* said Anne Fritz, the main organiser of the strike and a representative of USS. Back in 1991, many women were blocked from participating in the strike, with the country's main employers' organisation flatly opposed to the action.

Switzerland was one of the last countries in Europe to grant women the right to vote, in 1971. Over the past three decades, women's rights advocates in Switzerland have made some gains. Abortion was legalised in 2002, and 2005 saw the introduction of 14 weeks of paid maternity leave. But Switzerland still offers no paternity leave, and limited access to expensive daycare is seen as a major hindrance to women's integration into the labour market.

The strike has mobilized a sense of solidarity among women workers.

(Courtesy – AFP)

The Global Shift to the Right

Prabhat Patnaik

We often miss this aspect in our discussions, but Modi's re-election is part of a global Right-ward shift that is taking place. Netanyahu got re-elected in Israel. Erdogan got massively re-elected in Turkey. The Conservative government came back to power in Australia against all predictions to the contrary. In country after country in Latin America, where the Left ruled until recently, igniting hopes for a Left resurgence elsewhere as well, we now have Right-wing governments; the most significant and the most notorious of these is in Brazil, where the new president, Jair Bolsonaro, is on record defending the earlier military regime and even saying that it should have killed some more people! And to cap it all, in last Sunday's European Union elections, which just followed the counting of votes in India on Thursday, there has been a palpable shift to the Right.

It now appears that Marine Le Pen's far-Right party will be the biggest party in France in these elections, nosing ahead of President Emmanuel Macron's Centrist alliance. And Italian deputy prime minister Matteo Salvini's far-Right party will not only be the largest in Italy but could even be the biggest party in the European parliament, just beating Angela Merkel's party to this position. Merkel's party lost nine per cent votes compared to five years ago; and within Germany itself, the far-Right party, Alternative for Germany, increased its vote share to 10.5 per cent. In Hungary Victor Orban's party is also set to romp home to victory.

While Modi's victory obviously owes much to domestic developments, we must not forget the global context where there is a massive Right-ward shift. When there is such a concerted move to the Right, we must ask the question: why is this so? Liberal bourgeois analysts, instead of seeing the commonality between these various parties and movements, tend to take a fragmented picture of reality: they divide European parties into pro-EU and anti-EU, or pro-immigration and anti-immigration; likewise they see Modi's victory as an Indian phenomenon, linked to *Hindutva*, but unconnected to what is happening in Europe. Even the strengthening prospect of Donald Trump's re-election is seen in isolation from these developments. But such liberal fragmentation will not do for Marxist analysis, which seeks out common patterns, and identifies unfolding class configurations. What can we say as Marxists to this Right-ward lurch across the world?

It is clearly the manifestation of the economic crisis which has been gripping the world economy since 2008. There have been occasional signs of a mild recovery from it, but no sooner than these signs appear, than the world economy once more gets plunged into a crisis. In fact the analogy of a ball bouncing along the floor describes the world economy very well: every time the ball bounces up there are cries of a recovery, which disappear when the ball drops back to the floor.

This claim may be disputed by the fact that the US unemployment rate today is apparently lower than it has been for decades; but the work participation rate too has dropped compared to 2008. If we assume the same work participation rate today as in early 2008, then the US unemployment rate today would be 8 per cent and not 4 per cent which is the official figure. It is in this context of crisis and unemployment that there is a shift to the Right all across the world. The liberal bourgeois parties have generally been in denial mode when it comes to the crisis and the consequent unemployment. The Right at least recognises the distress caused by unemployment, though it blames not the system but the immigrants for it, and wants to put curbs on immigration. Since within the EU, there has to be free migration of workers across countries, many on the Right are also anti-EU. In a situation where the

liberal bourgeois parties deny the existence of crisis, and the Left is slow to put an alternative agenda before the people, the Right has seized the initiative and has moved in with its anti-immigration agenda. Its world-wide growth is thus attributable to its taking cognizance of crisis and unemployment, which the pro-establishment political parties have not.

But then where does the Indian case fit into this? Even in India, Modi came to power in 2014 on a “development” agenda. The fact is that the growth rate had come down during UPA II, so that the promise of neoliberalism improving everyone’s lot was beginning to fade. When in power, the Modi government did literally nothing to redeem its promise of “development” or “*vikas*”, which is why in the just-concluded elections it did not utter a word on the subject. But it changed the discourse to “fighting terrorism”, “ensuring the nation’s security”, “teaching Pakistan a lesson”, and “instituting *Hindutva*”, which conveniently by-passed awkward questions like what it had done to bring about “development” during its years of power, and yet served it well.

The point remains however that the shift from a neoliberal party like the Congress to a Right-wing party like the BJP became possible because of the crisis of neoliberalism. The Congress could no longer pretend that neoliberalism would bring about “development”. The BJP did not talk about “development” at all after an initial period, but changed the discourse completely, much to the satisfaction of the corporate-financial oligarchy (so much so that the Sensex rose sharply when the exit polls predicted a BJP victory).

This change in discourse however will have only a transitory effect. Neither the Congress nor the BJP have any clues about how to overcome the crisis of neoliberalism and provide employment to the millions of unemployed. In fact a section of the Congress can see the difficulty of going along the old neoliberal track, which is why in its election manifesto there was talk of NYAYA, a scheme of transfers to the bottom quintile of the population. But this scheme which in the normal course would have generated much enthusiasm, and could even have been a game-changer for the Congress, proved to be a damp squib, because no credible estimates of how the money was going to be raised were provided. The people instinctively felt that this was just an election promise which would be broken on the morning after the elections.

But just as the centrist, liberal-bourgeois, Congress party has no idea how to take the economy forward, the BJP is equally clueless. Its brand of “nationalism” will soon wear thin. You cannot keep people hooked to a daily dose of anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim rhetoric, when they are unemployed and hungry. Besides, the economic situation does not remain at a standstill. Even if the Modi government does nothing in the realm of the economy, the economy will not leave Modi alone. The crisis will get aggravated, with recession and balance of payments difficulties becoming more acute over time. And when that happens, the Modi government will have no answers for it (though, of course, by then rescuing the economy would have become that much more difficult).

With neither of the neoliberal formations being able to provide an answer to the burning material problems of the people, it is only the Left, which can go beyond neoliberal capitalism, that can provide a way out of the crisis, though this way out would take us eventually beyond capitalism itself. This is true not only in India but in the rest of the world as well.

We are in short looking at a historical conjuncture where, no matter how successful the Right may be in the short-run in mobilising the people around a false or divisive agenda, it is basically incapable of leading them out of their current state of unemployment and desperation. There are moments in the history of a nation when the existing system appears stable and capable of a long life; but all this changes quickly and new moments appear when the system simply cannot go on as before. For capitalism, now is such a moment, not just in India but all over the world. No matter how successful the Right may be electorally here and elsewhere, it cannot alter this basic fact.

Prepare for Intensified United Fight

NITI Ayog has announced 'big bang' reform through anti-worker changes in labour laws and fast tracking privatisation or closure of 46 PSUs. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman of NITI Ayog has categorically said that *"They (the foreign investors) will have reasons to be happy"* and the government will *"build an inventory of government land that can be offered to foreign investors"*. We must read this statement along with the statement by the US private corporates asking the new Indian government to have 'bold reforms' including change in land and labour laws and e-commerce.

Changes in labour laws are meticulously designed to impose conditions of slavery on the working people. Similarly privatisation of CPSUs will lead to looting of national assets by the government's most favoured corporates and destruction of indigenous manufacturing capability of the national economy and setting the pace of deindustrialization.

The Modi government's big bang reform will put the lives and livelihoods of the mass of the people in disaster- the same people who gave the Modi government a decisive mandate. The mission of NDA-02 government is pay back to the "DONORS" both in the country and abroad while forcibly looting the "VOTERS" - the people at large.

The disastrous anti-people and anti-national move of the government must be opposed with the full might of the united struggle of the mass of the workers led by the United Platform of Central Trade Unions and National Federations.

CITU calls upon its affiliated unions and the working class of the country to be prepared for bigger struggles to defend the hard earned rights and the sovereignty of the country.

On Decision to Reduce ESI Contribution

The Centre of Indian Trade Union denounces the unilateral and arbitrary decision of the Govt of India to reduce rates of contribution to Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESI) in gross violation of the decision of the tripartite Governing Body of ESI.

In the 175th tripartite Governing Body meeting of ESI held on 18-09-2018, it was unanimously decided to reduce the employers' contribution to ESI from 4.75% of the wages of the enrolled workers to 4% and the workers contribution from 1.75% to 1% making the total ESI contributions at 5% annually. Accordingly draft Gezette Notification was issued asking for opinion, if any, within 45 days. Simultaneously in the 177th Governing Body meeting held on 19 February 2019 ESI Budget for the coming financial year (1919-20) was finalized on the basis of this the contribution generation of 5%.

Now suddenly, after the new Govt assumed charge with the same Labour Minister, the Govt declared further deduction in ESI contribution to 3.25% (a deduction of 1.5% for the employers) while reducing the workers contribution to 0.75% further reducing the total contribution-generation to 4%.

In totality, the employers' obligation towards ESI has been drastically reduced by 1.5% while reducing the workers contribution by only 1%. This would lead to huge benefits/savings of the employers to the tune of estimated Rs 8000 to Rs 10000 crore.

And ill motive of the Govt to benefit the employers' lobby gets further clear by the fact that in the meeting of the tripartite Standing Committee of ESI Governing Body held on 13th June 2019, nothing was reported about the Govt decision on reduction of ESI contribution to be announced on same day evening 7-35 pm, and its arbitrary departure from the unanimous decision of the Governing Body of which Labour Minister was a party.

The increase of increase in enrollment in ESI as claimed by the Govt is due to upward revision of entitlement level from Rs15000/ to Rs 21000/- from 1-1-2017 as decided by the Tripartite Governing Body. Reduction in ESI contribution mainly to benefit the employers/business class played no role in it. Rather this is going to create serious difficulty to meet its obligations of social security and medical benefit to the enhanced number of beneficiaries.

CITU vehemently condemns such arbitrary move of the NDA-II Govt in the interest of the corporate lobby and demands implementation of the Governing Body decision on ESI contribution dated on 18-09-2018 in letter and spirit.

Struggle Against Climate Change is Part of Struggle Against Capitalism

Savera

India is suffering the longest heat wave in decades and 40% of the country is facing drought. This may end with the arrival of monsoon rains but there is no escaping the fact that the weather and climate are changing right in front of our eyes. There are more storms and cyclones. There is less rain. Winters are erratic – sometimes harsh, sometimes unusually warm. There are more floods and their intensity is often much more than expected – as we saw last year in Kerala. Heat waves are increasing and there are more severely hot days and nights than before. Weather is day to day conditions – hot or cold or rainy or dry. The average of weather taken over a long period is called climate. What is changing is climate itself.

What is climate change?

Climate can change due to natural causes. 6.5 crore years ago, the earth was hotter and dinosaurs roamed on it. About 15,000 years ago, there was an Ice Age when the whole earth was covered with ice and snow.

But what is happening today is not because of natural causes. Climate is changing because of human activity. Scientists have proved this by studying the history of various records of temperatures, rainfall, snowfall, and even archaeological evidence. Here is how.

The earth is surrounded by a mixture of gases (air) known as the atmosphere. The gases allow heat from the sun to pass in and warm the earth, but prevent heat from escaping from the earth. This is called the greenhouse effect. Gases responsible for this effect are called greenhouse gases (GHG's) – carbon dioxide, methane, water vapour, etc. Other gases in the atmosphere like oxygen and nitrogen don't have this effect.

Human activity since the industrial revolution has disturbed the balance of gases in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are the highest now in 650,000 thousand years. Since the industrial revolution, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has gone up by 40%. This is because modern human life involves a huge emission of carbon dioxide, mainly from burning fossil fuels (petrol, diesel, coal and wood). Deforestation also releases gases in the air, and reduces the absorption of carbon dioxide by trees.

This increase in carbon dioxide and other gases in the atmosphere causes more heat to remain trapped on the earth than before. This is called global warming, which causes changes in climate.

Impact of Climate Change

Scientists predict that if gas emissions are not capped, global average temperatures may increase by 1.1 to 6.4 degrees Celsius by the end of this century. This will have devastating effects on human civilization, and also on all life on the planet. The ice caps at the south and north poles are already melting – they have reduced by 34% in the past 150 years. This will raise sea levels threatening millions of people who live on coasts around the world, including megapolises like Mumbai, Tokyo, New York, London and Sao Paulo. Several island nations, like Maldives may be submerged.

Mountain glaciers, as in the Himalayas, have retreated significantly during the 20th century due to melting. In the future, several major river systems that are the lifeline of millions (like the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Mekong, Indus, etc.) will carry less water.

Rainfall has already increased in many parts of the world - by about 0.5-1% per decade in many mid and high-level areas of the northern hemisphere. In the same areas, frequency of heavy rainfall events has increased by 2-4%. In Asia and Africa, frequency and intensity of droughts has gone up in the last few decades. Drying has been observed in the Sahel (region south of the Sahara), the Mediterranean, southern Africa and parts of southern Asia.

In general, poorer people will be affected more and earlier because they are concentrated in the riskier zones (coasts, riverine deltas, tropics) and have less resources to adapt to changing climate. Most of the poorer countries are dependent on agriculture which will be severely affected by climate change.

Crisis Caused by Capitalism

There is excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere not only because of current high emissions but also because of accumulated emissions from the past. For over three hundred years, as capitalism developed in the West, it cut down forests, used up resources, burnt coal and later, petroleum, to extract maximum profits and lead a life of plentiful consumption. In the process they also filled up the atmosphere with greenhouse gases. Taking into account all emissions in the industrial era, 70% of the accumulated carbon dioxide has come from the rich countries of the West.

Even today, there is a vast difference between the carbon dioxide emissions between rich and poor countries if you take into account their respective populations.

If you calculate how much emission is done per person of a country, this difference becomes stark. For example, per person emission in US is about 20 tonnes carbon dioxide while in India it is only about 0.8 tonnes per person. Although the US population is about one third of India's, its emissions are nearly double that of India. The US contributes over 13% of global emissions while India contributes 7%.

Inequality of Emissions

Despite all the big talk about global efforts to cut emissions, the jaw dropping chasm between emissions of the poor and the rich is rarely talked about. The richest 10 percent people of the world are responsible for almost half of all global carbon emissions while the poorest 50 percent of the world – some 3.5 billion people – cause just 10 percent of it in one year, according to a study.

In other words: a person belonging to the poorest half of the world emits just 1.57 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year while a person belonging to the richest 10% emits 17.6 tonnes – over 11 times more. If you compare the richest 10 percent with the poorest 10 percent, the gap is mind boggling. The carbon footprint of the richest is 60 times larger than that of the poorest at a global level.

The vast majority of the richest 10 percent of the world stay in the rich countries – North America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. In fact, a third of them stay in the US. It is their profligate consumerism that is driving emissions.

What about India? It is estimated that per person emissions of India's richest 10 percent are about 2 tonnes while India's poorest 50 percent population has a per capita emission of a mere 0.42 tonnes. Just as the world is divided between rich countries and poor ones, so is it in India. The rich are responsible for five times more emissions compared to the poor.

Global Carbon Footprint

Richest 10% emit 60 times more carbon than the poorest 10%

Richest 1% emit 175 times more carbon than poorest 10%

India

Richest 10% emit 5 times more carbon than poorest 50%

Emissions Cut

Reduction in emission of greenhouse gases is called emission cutting. It is usually measured as a percentage difference from any specified year. Emissions can be reduced either by slowing down economic activity, which nobody wants to do, or by various technological steps for replacing fossil fuels by renewable sources (solar, wind, etc.), cutting waste of energy, recycling, increasing forest cover to absorb more carbon (carbon sinks) etc.

As humanity strives to achieve better living standards for all, there is an increase in fuel consumption, industrial production and all other such activities that cause carbon dioxide emissions. For the developed countries, which have already achieved a high standard of living, emission cuts means changing their present lifestyle.

Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide, is the only way of preventing catastrophic changes in the earth's climate. This can be done by reducing burning of fossil fuels which are used for producing electricity, running motor vehicles, airplanes and ships, and in industrial production. In addition, stopping deforestation will help. All this means increasing use of renewable sources of energy like solar, nuclear, hydro etc. It also means changes in high consumption life-styles.

These efforts need to be made very fast because carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for 100 years. So, already accumulated carbon dioxide will continue to warm the earth for some time even if all emissions were to stop today. And, it needs to be a global effort because it is a global problem.

But, striving for cutting emissions to save our planet and humanity also means doing away with inequality of wealth and incomes. It means that the rich of the world need to stop destroying the planet through their luxury life styles and blind exploitation of natural resources. It means better and more just sharing of world's resources. In short, the fight to stop the climate from worsening, to stop runaway global warming, has to be integrated with the fight for a better, more equitable world.

Comrade B Madhava

Centre of Indian Trade Union expresses its grief at the demise of Comrade B Madhava (83), former President Karnataka State Committee of CITU and also President of the All India Beedi Workers' Federation (AIBWF), who passed away on 19th June 2019 at Mangalore after a prolonged illness.

He was the President of the CITU Karnataka State Committee from 2002 to 2010. He was a Working Committee Member of CITU.

His death is a big loss to the CITU especially CITU Karnataka and AIBWF.

CITU Secretariat expresses its deepest condolences to all his comrades and family members.

Factories Illegally Giving Women Pills to Keep them Working through Period Pains

Sudha seldom thought about the pills she took to ease her period pains during 10-hour shifts as a seamstress in South India. She could not afford to let anything interrupt her work and cut her wages, so she sought medicine from a factory supervisor.

“They were depressing days and the pills helped,” said the factory worker in Tamil Nadu, India’s southern textile hub. But by the end of her first year of work, after months of taking painkillers without medical advice, 17-year-old Sudha’s menstrual cycle had gone haywire – and she was not the only one.

A Thomson Reuters Foundation investigation based on interviews with about 100 women in Tamil Nadu’s multi-billion dollar garment industry found that all of them were given unlabelled drugs at work for period pains and that more than half said their health suffered. The drugs were rarely provided by medical professionals, in violation of labour laws. The state government said it would monitor the health of garment workers in light of the findings.

Many of the women said it took them years to realise the damage the medication had done as they were never warned about side effects. Health problems ranged from depression and anxiety, to urinary tract infections, fibroids and miscarriages.

Pills given to the Thomson Reuters Foundation by workers had no markings to show the brand, their composition or expiry date. Two doctors who analysed the pills said they were non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, similar to Ibuprofen and Advil. They could help relieve menstrual cramps but were known to have possible harmful side-effects if taken frequently.

Activists, academics and doctors have voiced concerns that female workers’ lives were being tightly controlled, from toilet breaks to periods, to keep production lines running as India’s garment sector faces ever greater demands from Western brands.

Medical tests found that Sudha – who did not give her surname for fear of reprisals – had fibroids, which are non-cancerous growths that develop in or around the uterus. A doctor said she needed to stop working and rest. But missing work and wages was not an option as she was helping her mother, a ragpicker, pay back a loan of Rs 1,50,000 to local moneylenders. *“Half my salary of Rs 6,000 rupees would go in paying off the loan and a big amount on my trips to the doctor,”* Sudha said. *“It became a cycle I was not able to break. And even though my health became worse, I needed to keep working to pay the bills.”*

An official from Tamil Nadu said the state would launch a project to monitor the health of its garment workers this year and collect data on how many suffered from work-related health problems.

While India’s Factories Act requires medical dispensaries to be run by qualified nurses or doctors, some small factories flout the law, said, the top official for occupational and environmental health in Tamil Nadu state.

Sudha, now 20, said frequent gynaecologist visits have wiped out her savings. This adds to the daily struggle of stitching up to 400 parts of clothing from collars and buttons to pockets.

“I have learnt to ignore my aches and pains when I go to work,” she said, holding a faded folder full of doctors’ notes and medical prescriptions. *“I also stay away from any pills. My body feels weak after the last couple of years working in the factory. It is difficult but I manage.”*

About 40,000 garment factories and spinning mills across Tamil Nadu employ more than 3,00,000 female workers, according to data from the government. But the true number could be far higher with thousands of uncounted informal workers. Mainly young village women from poor, illiterate and marginalised communities toil in these factories, working long days to produce garments destined for leading global retailers.

Growing pressure from big brands on suppliers to deliver clothes quicker and cheaper is fuelling exploitation from a lack of bathroom breaks to verbal abuse, labour activists said.

But the fear of missing work and losing wages due to periods was a major worry for many female workers who said taking painkillers was the best way to ensure their output didn’t slip.

Money Vs Health

In each factory, a supervisor known as the timekeeper monitors workers' hours and bathroom breaks and often manages a small medical dispensary for workers suffering aches and pains.

The women, most of whom were aged 15 to 25 - said they were always told to swallow the pills in front of the overseer. They were never told the name of the drugs or warned about possible side-effects.

They identified the pills only by colour, size and shape.

'Clearly Unacceptable'

Officials from the Tamil Nadu state and the Central government said they were not aware of pills being provided to workers.

Factories should refer workers with health concerns to the nearest hospital, said, the Tamil Nadu official.

"Unqualified supervisors doling out medicines should not be practised," he said, adding that medical dispensaries are legally required to be handled by a qualified nurse. *"But compliance, especially in smaller factories, is a problem. We will soon be doing surveillance across factories to get a real picture that will reflect the problems workers face."*

One timekeeper, who spoke on condition of anonymity to protect her job, said her role mainly involved providing painkillers to the 4,000 female workers under her watch. *"The pills that are consumed the most are the ones for stomach ache, but I don't know their names or their side effects,"* said the woman.

"During their periods, the medicines help them finish work. I myself would never swallow the pills – and dissuaded my close friends working from taking them also."

At a clinic in Dindigul, Dr P Nalina Kumari said she treated many women from spinning mills and garment factories. *"The pills they seem to be given are basically causing a hormonal imbalance in their bodies,"* she said. *"The visible symptoms are nausea and vomiting. The invisible symptoms are erratic menstrual cycles, depression and in many cases difficulty in conceiving."*

Stigma and Shame

Social stigma and taboos around menstruation in India are exploited by factory supervisors and managers. Instead of being given spare sanitary pads or allowed longer bathroom breaks, women were handed pills that stop their periods and were harassed for working slowly. It is an issue no one talks about or acknowledges but everyone knows about.

"Maximum work"

Under Indian labour laws, factories must have one toilet for every 20 workers but – barring a few major export factories – most do not, auditors and factory inspectors said.

"There are rules but implementation is a challenge," said an independent auditor carrying out checks for global brands who requested anonymity since he was presently conducting audits.

Workers get barely five minutes a day to use the restroom and many are thwarted by long queues.

Female workers said in many instances, dustbins were not cleared, regularly making the toilets impossible to use. *"The priority is always production,"* said the director of Community Awareness Research Education Trust, which promotes labour rights for garment workers in factories.

Manimekalai Natesan, head of women's studies at Bharatidasan University, started documenting the lives of garment workers in 2011 and said there had been little sign of improvement.

"The exploitative methods continue but under different names and forms," she said. *"In many instances, the toilets are deliberately kept dirty so that the women will refrain from using them and thereby not take restroom breaks. The idea is to extract maximum work."*

Sudha still works at the factory and has stopped hoping for change.

"I was very scared to speak up about the long hours, the period pain, the dirty bathrooms and so many other problems when I joined the factory," she said, recalling her first few days. *"Four years later, the salary is still the same, the work hours are the same and armed with her medicine box, the timekeeper is always watching our every move. Nothing has changed."*

(Mansi Thapliyal/Reuters) This article was first published by the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

**“The true character of a society is revealed in
how it treats its children”**

- Nelson Mandela



CITU expresses its deep grief and shock at the death of more than a hundred children who have succumbed to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) in Bihar, particularly in Muzaffarpur. CITU demands that the Central and state governments and health authorities take immediate measures to contain this raging epidemic.

We convey our heartfelt condolences to the families of the children.

The acute malnutrition prevailing in most parts of our country needs to be addressed on a war footing to prevent such incidents from recurring. The pathetic situation of the public health system is shockingly inadequate to address such a situation and is a result of criminal negligence by the centre and state governments.

The CITU demands that the central and state governments strengthen the nutrition and health delivery systems, the PDS, ICDS and public health centres.