

The Voice of the Working Woman

**WORKERS UNITE and STRUGGLE !
DEFEAT BJP and ITS ALLIES !**



Long Live May Day !

Golden Jubilee Celebration of CITU



As you are aware, 30th May this year marks the commencement of the 50th year of the foundation of CITU.

Since its formation in 1970 CITU has played a glorious role in bringing the entire trade union movement in a joint struggle against the neoliberal policies of successive governments at the centre and in protecting the basic labour and trade union rights of the working class.

Incidentally, 2020 will be the centenary year of the formation of the first all India trade union centre in our country, in 1920. The founding fathers of CITU were in the forefront in organising the industrial workers and leading struggles to protect their interests under the British rule. They played a crucial role in the formation of the first national trade union centre, AITUC and in leading militant struggles under its banner until the class collaborationist path chosen by the then AITUC leadership and their suppression of trade union democracy compelled us to form CITU with the slogan 'Unity and Struggle'. CITU today carries forward the legacy of the struggles and sacrifices of the forefathers of the trade union movement of our country who dreamt of ending all exploitation under the leadership of the working class.

The CITU secretariat has decided to observe an entire year starting from 30th May 2019 commemorating the 100 years of the formation of the first national trade union centre and 50 years of formation of CITU through various programmes and activities, with the slogan:

**'Carrying Forward -
100 Years of Struggles and Sacrifices ! 50 Years of Fight for Class Unity !'**

The celebration will start with a meeting in Mavalankar Hall in New Delhi at 02.00 p.m. on 30th May 2019, aimed at setting the tone and momentum for the year long programmes.

The Voice of the Working Woman

Monthly Journal of the AICW(CITU)

Editorial Board

Editor

K Hemalata

Working Editor

Ranjana Nirula

Members

A R Sindhu

Sunanda Bhattacharya

Anju Maini

Inside

	Page		Page
May Day Manifesto	4	Special Report	17
Fifty Years of CITU	8	The Facts Speak	20
Women in Beed	10	On BSNL	23
When You Vote	14	Breaking Barriers	27

Total pages - 28
(including cover pages)

In the Midst of Elections

The 'Voice of the Working Woman' extends its warm fraternal greetings and solidarity to the workers and all sections of toiling people, men and women, on the occasion of May Day, the International Day of Working Class Solidarity.

This May Day in our country will be held in the midst of the elections to the 17th Lok Sabha or more specifically when the elections would have been well past the half mark. People in 374 Parliamentary constituencies would have already cast their votes with only 169 Parliamentary constituencies in 9 states yet to go to the polls.

By the end of the month, by the time we celebrate the Foundation Day of CITU, the beginning of its Golden Jubilee, the results will be declared. Hopefully a new government, more responsive to the workers' and people's demands, will be in place. However, for any marked change for better living and working conditions of people, it is imperative for the neoliberal regime to be reversed. This requires broadening and heightening of united struggles. Whichever government assumes power after elections, the working class and the toiling people must prepare themselves for such struggles.

What the 'Voice' had predicted has come true during this election campaign. Aware of the growing anger and discontent of people across the country against the Modi government's misrule, corruption scandals and blatant display of cronyism, lavishing huge benefits to its corporate friends, and desperate to retain power at any cost, BJP leaders are resorting to spreading hatred and lies. The Prime Minister and the party president are leading the campaign of canards with other leaders following suit. Realising that 'appeals' would no longer be of use, in the face of the Modi and Adityanath governments' record of attacks, violence, lynching and killing of Muslims, Maneka Gandhi resorted to threats. She warned Muslims not to come to her asking for any favour if they did not vote for her!

Despite the Election Code of Conduct being in place, all wings of the administrative machinery are being fully utilised by the BJP to intimidate opposition candidates. A section of the corporate media is acting as the paid servant of the BJP government. Ruling party goons are attacking and threatening opposition party candidates, particularly of the Left, in West Bengal and Tripura. Voters of the Left parties are not being allowed to vote in these states. The repeated representations and delegations to the Election Commission have not yielded any result so far. The intervention of the Supreme Court has followed with some lukewarm response from the Election Commission in acting against some leaders. But, till now, no action has been taken against the Prime Minister who is leading from the front in the violating the Code of Conduct, utilising Pulwama, the Balakot attacks, and the military for BJP's electoral purposes. Not even a warning has been issued to him.

This is being done to divert people's attention from their burning day to day livelihood issues, to hide its failures in all aspects of governance. The present election is yet another example of the vulnerabilities of Parliamentary democracy in the capitalist system.

The trade union movement has tried to keep these issues alive and in the public discourse through its 'Workers' Charter'. CITU has campaigned on alternative pro people policies, which were also highlighted by the Left. Real people's democracy can be achieved only through strong popular mass movements on such alternative policies.

CITU MAY DAY MANIFESTO, 2019

On this May Day, the Day of International Solidarity of the Working Class, CITU

Extends warm fraternal greetings to all working people across the world

Stands in solidarity with their struggles to defend their hard won rights from the dogged onslaught of neoliberalism, particularly in the aftermath of the systemic global crisis of capitalism, which continues even after more than a decade.

On this May Day, CITU

Condemns in strongest terms the imperialist led interventions, sabotage activities, attacks and wars in Venezuela, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan and other countries; Extends its solidarity to the people and all progressive forces in these countries fighting US imperialist machinations; Deplores Israeli attempts, with open connivance of US imperialism to annexe Palestine territories; demands recognition of the independent sovereign state of Palestine with 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital.

Reiterates firmly that the fight against imperialism is an integral part of the class struggle to defeat the exploitative capitalist system and usher in an exploitation free socialist system, to which CITU is firmly committed

Stands with the people in socialist countries defending socialism and their right to independently and freely choose the social system of their choice without any external interference or aggression. In particular, reaffirms its solidarity with the struggle of socialist Cuba against US imperialist machinations and demands withdrawal of illegitimate sanctions imposed on them.

Raises its serious alarm at the rise in the Right wing, Regressive, Reactionary, Racist, Neo-fascist and Terrorist forces in different parts of the world, being promoted by international finance and the corporate class to divide people and disrupt united struggles against neoliberalism; Stands in rock solidarity with all peoples across the world fighting these forces which offer no alternative to neoliberalism but utilise people's discontent to divert it into fratricidal fights to serve their corporate masters; Calls upon the working class and the toiling people across the world to identify and isolate these enemies of the people and protect people's unity with all their might

Congratulates the workers across the world, including in developed countries who have been increasingly joining struggles against the so called 'austerity policies', to protect their rights, wages and working and living conditions; Heartily congratulates the working class of India for the magnificent two days' strike, the 18th countrywide general strike since the advent of neoliberal policies in the country, on 8-9 January 2019; extends its gratitude to the peasants, agricultural workers and all sections of progressive people who have extended their solidarity to the strike; many other sections of workers including in defence-production, telecom etc who went on three days' strike; extends solidarity to the struggling workers in many units of multinational corporations like Daikin, Toyota, Yamaha, Pricol, etc in various parts of the country

Salutes the working class and the people in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala and in other states who have been bravely resisting the onslaughts on their basic democratic rights by the ruling

classes, using their musclemen. The Trinamool goons in West Bengal and the BJP hoodlums in Tripura have been physically attacking the people, particularly supporters of the Left; the state governments have made a mockery of the democratic process not allowing people to vote freely. Scores of Left cadres and supporters have been physically assaulted, injured and killed. However, the working class in these states have been increasingly resisting such attacks. The BJP has been trying to gain influence in Kerala by opportunistically promoting its retrograde and regressive 'Hindutva' ideology undermining Constitutional bodies including the Supreme Court. The RSS goons have been trying to spread hate and violence attacking and killing the Left cadres.

Expresses anger at the growing attacks on the dalits and minorities in various parts of the country, particularly in the BJP ruled states; While being ideologically committed to the retrograde and hierarchical *Manusmriti* that seeks to suppress dalits, adivasis and women BJP and RSS seek to hoodwink and woo dalits only for their electoral gains

Affirms its belief that that majority and minority communalism and fundamentalism thrive on each other; communalisms of whatever colours and flags divide people, disrupt their unity, divert their attention from real day to day issues, weaken their struggle against the real culprit – the neoliberal policies and the exploitative system; ultimately all forms of communalism serve the exploiting classes

Appreciates the committed and consistent efforts of its cadres in all these states to protect the unity of the workers by keeping alive the discourse on their livelihood issues, exposing the anti-worker policies of the governments and safeguarding their united struggles and the secular ethos of the country.

Notes with utmost concern the aggravating inequalities and concentration of wealth, produced by the sweat and blood of the toiling masses, in the hands of a few, under neoliberalism; this wealth is amassed by increasing exploitation of the working people, cronyism, evading taxes and grabbing public properties and natural resources – land, forests, mines, waters – displacing poor peasants, adivasis and others

Fully supports the call of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) to observe this May Day with the slogan '**The Wealth Belongs To Those Who Produce It**'; CITU commits to strengthen the WFTU in its efforts to strengthen the struggle against the exploitative capitalist system with more determined class orientation

Expresses outrage that in the profit driven capitalist system, the huge scientific and technological advances achieved through the collective efforts of humanity, are cornered by a few countries and a few corporates who use them, not for the benefit of the people but to multiply their profits and impoverish the toiling class. It is a shame for all humanity that millions of people suffer from unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, ill health, lack of housing and basic amenities of life, in the midst of such wealth locked in the hands of a few;

Asserts that such inhuman system, the capitalist system, has no right to continue. It cannot be allowed to continue

On this May Day, CITU

Pledges to heighten the consciousness of the workers on the role of the working class in uprooting the capitalist system and to prepare it for the ultimate struggle to end all exploitation

**This May Day, coming as it is, in the midst of the Elections to the Parliament in our country, India,
CITU**

Calls upon the working class, all the toiling people, progressive, patriotic and forward looking people of the country

To Decisively Defeat the Anti worker, Anti people and Anti national BJP that has been aggressively pursuing the corporate dictated neoliberal agenda along with the RSS driven communal and divisive policies. It calls upon the people to strengthen the presence of the Left, the real friend of the toiling people, inside the Parliament.

During its five year tenure, the BJP led government of Modi has mortgaged the nation's interest at the altar of the profit greedy corporates, domestic and foreign, wreaking havoc in the lives and livelihoods of the people. It has been actively working to destroy the indigenous manufacturing capabilities of our country including in core and strategic sectors like defence production to make the country perpetually dependent on the imperialist owned foreign capital. Our public sector undertakings, our natural resources, our land, our mines, our forests, our seas are being offered to big domestic and foreign corporates on a platter for unbridled exploitation, whereas our farmers, our adivasis, our fishers and our workers are losing their only sources of livelihood.

Even as neoliberalism is getting more and more discredited globally, the BJP led government under the dictates of international finance, has been pursuing it more aggressively, with a single minded focus on improving the 'Ease of Doing Business' by promoting 'Ease of Looting People and Country's Resources'. The basic labour and trade union rights of the workers, the democratic and Constitutional rights of the people are under serious attack. Slave like conditions are sought to be imposed on workers. Dissenting voices are being crushed underfoot. Human Rights activists are being threatened, attacked, jailed and even killed.

Successive years of imperialist led neoliberalism, intensified under the BJP rule have:

- Resulted in Job less and Job loss growth
- No new employment-generating private investment worth its name; industries are closing
- Increased unemployment to an alarming height, particularly among our youth; unemployment today is at 45 years' high
- Led to disappearance of decent, dignified and permanent jobs
- Resulted in stagnation, even decline of wages for most of the workers
- Increased inequalities in wages, income and wealth
- Continued farmers' suicides and rural distress
- Reduced MGNREGA work
- Slowed down the economy

On this May Day, CITU

Welcomes the growing struggles of the workers, peasants, agricultural workers, youth, students – all sections of society to defend their livelihoods, living and working conditions; CITU welcomes the growing struggles of various sections including Dalits and adivasis to assert their Constitutional and democratic rights

Calls upon the working class and the toiling people to intensify these struggles further, whichever government comes to power after the elections, with the aim to defeat the neoliberal regime; to intensify united struggles to change the direction of the policies from 'pro corporate' to 'pro people'.

Asserts that the country has enough resources to bring about this change; it has vast human resources; it has the necessary financial resources to deploy our youth, our men and women in gainful employment and provide **decent minimum wages**, food for all, houses for all, education for all, health for all, universal social security and old age pension for all needy and all the basic necessities for a decent and dignified life for all.

On this May Day, CITU

Reiterates its conviction that the challenges confronting the working class and the toiling people in the country today necessitate three pronged struggle – the struggle against neoliberalism, against divisive communal and casteist forces and against authoritarianism.

Proclaims its determination to mobilise the entire working class in the country to effectively face these challenges.

It reiterates its strong determination to strengthen and widen the unity of all sections of toiling people and mobilise them into united struggles; this is the prerequisite for heightening the struggle for resistance to the anti-people socio-economic-political regime.

Stresses the need for unity of the workers, poor peasants and agricultural workers to fight the neoliberal order and the capitalist system that subjects all of them to intense exploitation and resolve to work in that direction.

Is determined to take up independent campaigns, initiatives to strengthen the joint trade union movement as well as united struggles of all toiling masses by placing concrete alternative policies to neoliberalism in order to achieve widest possible mobilisation of the toiling masses.

Pledges to observe the centenary year of the formation of first national trade union centre in the country and beginning of the fiftieth year of foundation of CITU throughout 2019-20 with the theme slogan: “100 years of struggles and sacrifices-50 years of fight for unity of the working class” through various educative programmes and activities focussed on “unity and struggle”.

Reiterates its belief that development of such massive struggles and its pursuit in continuity alone can lead to a comprehensive change in the correlation of class forces in favour of the working class.

On this May Day 2019, CITU appeals to the working class of India to:

Strengthen unity and intensify the struggle to defeat neoliberal policies and for alternative pro worker pro people policies

Deepen bonds of solidarity among all sections of toiling people – workers, agricultural workers, poor peasants; Develop stronger united struggles of workers and peasants at all levels including village and district level

Be vigilant and defeat the machinations of communal and casteist forces to disrupt unity

Identify the real enemy of the working class and all sections of toiling people – the capitalist system and the politics and forces that promote the system; prepare for the struggle to change this exploitative system

On this May Day CITU Raises its banner in support of International Working Class Solidarity and Unity Against all Exploitation and Oppression

**Down With Capitalism and Imperialism
Long Live Socialism
Workers of the World Unite**

Class Unity - Class Struggle

Class Struggle to End Exploitation

For Social Transformation

It was with this vision that Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was founded in 1970. The yearlong Golden Jubilee celebrations of CITU will start on its Foundation Day this year, on 30th May.

This vision was clearly spelt out in the Constitution of CITU thus: 'The CITU believes that the exploitation of the working class can be ended only by socialising all means of production, distribution and exchange and establishing a Socialist State. Holding fast the ideals of socialism, the CITU stands for the complete emancipation of the society from all exploitation'.

Further, 'It firmly adheres to the position that no transformation can be brought about without class struggle and shall constantly repel attempts to take the working class along the path of class collaboration'.

This vision stood the test of time. Fifty years of experience has further strengthened CITU's determination to carry forward this vision to achieve its Constitutional objectives.

CITU was born at a time when the working class of the country was simmering with discontent and anger at the growing attacks on their working and living conditions. Closures, job losses, increasing contractorisation, denial of collective bargaining rights, social security benefits etc resulted in outbursts of struggles and strikes in different sectors in different parts of the country. Jute workers, coal workers, steel workers, textile workers, transport workers and hundreds of thousands of workers in various other industries, were all on the struggle path.

The need of the hour was to unite all the workers in each sector, to unite all the workers in all sectors into a common united struggle against these attacks, against the policies of the then government, against the exploitative policy regime. The need of the hour was to unite the entire trade union movement to build a powerful class struggle against these attacks as well as the policies.

But the then leadership of the dominant Left trade union, AITUC chose, not the path of class struggle but the path of class collaboration in the name of the 'two pillar policy'. The very idea of class struggle was sought to be ridiculed. The section of leadership within the AITUC that favoured class unity and class struggle was harassed, victimised and undemocratically and unceremoniously removed from leadership positions, from the unions. The unions that supported class struggle were denied affiliation; their affiliations were cancelled.

After all the efforts through a period of around ten years to steer the organisation away from the path of class collaboration and compromise with the ruling classes failed, the need to form a new trade union centre to bring the trade union movement of the country into the track of united struggles against the government policies was strongly felt. CITU was born with the thunderous slogan 'Unity and Struggle'.

BT Ranadive was elected the first president and P Ramamurty, the first general secretary.

Soon after its formation, CITU, through its actions gave a befitting reply to all those who sought to isolate it and ridiculed its slogan of 'unity'.

- ♦ Soon after CITU's formation, in an attempt to isolate it, the National Council of Trade Unions (NCTU) was formed with INTUC, AITUC and HMS at the initiative the then Union Labour Minister, to support government policies. CITU effectively countered it by bringing the other trade union centres and industrial federation together to form the United Council of Trade Unions (UCTU) to fight against the government policies like wage freeze, compulsory deposit scheme etc
- ♦ The isolationist strategy of the ruling classes through could not be sustained for long in the face of vigorous efforts by CITU to unite the other forces both in industries and

services to carry on united struggles. Within three years NCTU collapsed. New correlation started developing within the country's trade union movement through CITU's consistent fight against class collaborationist policies.

- ◆ Most important of the united struggles, soon after the formation of CITU, was the all India strike by the railway workers in 1974 that galvanised the entire working class in the country. The twenty day strike braving inhuman repression and victimisation is a source of inspiration to the working class even today. CITU also played an important role in bringing the railway workers into the path of united country wide struggles. The National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggles (NCCRS) that led the historic strike involved all major central trade unions except INTUC. CITU was an active constituent of the NCCRS. It organised solidarity actions, legal aid and all other forms of relief and support for the victimised workers.
- ◆ Despite the huge repression and attacks on democratic rights and freedoms during the Emergency, CITU actively supported people's struggles and exposed the government's attacks on trade union rights by lodging complaints with the ILO
- ◆ The Second notable event was the united struggle against infamous Industrial Relations Bill, 1978 brought by Janata Party government at the centre, which ultimately had to be shelved. In that process, National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions was formed comprising all central trade unions and independent federations except INTUC in 1981 during the Congress (I) regime.
- ◆ CITU was the pioneer in paying special attention to the task of organising working women, with a clear understanding that it is a class task – a part of uniting the class and strengthening class struggle. In 1979, it organised the first ever national convention of working women by a central trade union, and constituted the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women to advance its work among working women. This untiring work of over four decades has resulted in the increase of women's membership in CITU to more than 33%, active participation of women in all activities of CITU including in its decision making bodies at all levels.
- ◆ The first ever countrywide general strike by all the trade union centres except INTUC, held on 19th January 1982 was the third historic joint struggle in which CITU had played a prominent role. Through this strike the working class has also raised the demands for farmers and agricultural workers drawing their active participation in various parts of the country. 10 workers including agricultural workers died in police firing in various parts of the country on that day.
- ◆ CITU played a frontline role in unifying the public sector unions in united platform of struggle and in the formation of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU)
- ◆ Since the advent of the neoliberal reforms in the country, CITU took initiative to unite the entire trade union movement, the central trade unions and the all India independent industrial federations, in joint struggles. The Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions led several country wide general strikes. In 2009, for the first time all the central trade unions including INTUC and BMS joined the common platform that led three country wide general strikes including the two days' strike in February 2013. However, after the BJP led government came to power at the centre, BMS deserted the joint trade union movement. Altogether 18 country wide general strikes were held under the leadership of the joint trade union movement, the latest one being the historic on 8-9 January 2019 in which around 20 crore workers participated and which received wide support of the common people.
- ◆ In addition the various federations of CITU have taken initiatives to build strong joint struggles including strikes in their respective sectors as in coal, steel, plantation, anganwadi, ASHA, midday meal workers etc
- ◆ The independent campaigns and struggles led by CITU were also instrumental in encouraging and motivating joint campaigns and struggles. However, CITU never hesitated

to go alone to defend the interests of the working class even when it stood isolated and the other trade unions took a pro government line, as in the case of the Family Pension Scheme of 1971 and the issue of Employees Pension Scheme 1995.

- ◆ In addition to developing working class unity, CITU understands the importance of bringing all the other basic classes involved in the production process, the agricultural workers, peasants etc into joint struggles to fight the anti people policies, to achieve its ultimate objective of ending all exploitation. It has been organising joint campaigns and mobilisations on the common demands of the workers, agricultural workers and the peasants in commemoration of the martyrdom of the workers and peasants who died in police firing on 19th January 1982. The 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' held on 5th September 2018, the first ever such mobilisation in the national capital, in which lakhs of workers, peasants and agricultural workers participated has inspired the toiling people and progressive sections in the entire country.
- ◆ With the expansion of the unorganised sector under the neoliberal policies, CITU directed its attention to organising the unorganised sector workers, as part of its efforts to unite the class, organising them trade wise and mobilising them on their specific demands. Today, 70% of the membership of CITU is from the unorganised sector.
- ◆ CITU understands that realising its vision of ending all exploitation and transforming society is impossible with a 'cadre follow leader' type of organisation. It has fought the anti democratic practices within the then AITUC and has been underscoring the importance of trade union democracy within the organisation. The Constitution of CITU itself emphasises this.
- ◆ Two important milestones in the fifty years' history of CITU are the adoption of its two major documents on organisation. The first one adopted in 1993 called the 'Bhubaneswar Document on Organisation' remains its basic guideline to strengthen the organisation. This was updated in 2018 in Kozhikode to meet the requirements of the changed situation, while preserving and emphasising the basic thrust on democratic functioning and political ideological development of cadres up to the grass root level. The Bhubaneswar Document and the Kozhikode Document indicate, through its frank and open criticism and self criticism, CITU's determination to concretely identify its weaknesses and strengthen the organisation by overcoming them. It is the clear understanding of CITU that its political task cannot be delinked from its organisational tasks.

Today, when we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our organisation, we can proudly look back to our glorious role in the history of the trade union movement of our country. We carry the legacy of the struggles and sacrifices of the thousands of workers and cadres who believed, since the days of the struggle for Independence, in class struggle as a means to end all exploitation and transform society, who believed in Socialism as an alternative to the exploitative capitalist system. We carry the legacy of those who envisioned such an exploitation free society when they formed the first national trade union centre, a century ago.

Thus, we celebrate our Golden Jubilee with the slogan 'Carrying Forward -100 Years of Struggles and Sacrifices! 50 Years of Fight for Class Unity!

During the year long Golden Jubilee celebration of the foundation of CITU, let us rededicate ourselves to achieve our revolutionary objectives. Let us dedicate this year to making the working class aware of its role in transforming society.

Reach the Unreached!
Link issues with Policies!
Expose the Politics guiding the Policies!
Develop Conscious Capable Committed Cadres!
For widest class unity! For intensified class struggles!
Strengthen CITU! March Ahead!

Many Women in Beed Have No Wombs

Radheshyam Jadhav

Lakhs of men and women from the Marathwada region migrate to work as cane cutters between October and March .

Cane-cutting contractors are unwilling to hire women who menstruate, so hysterectomies have become the norm. Some doctors in the area also tell the women that they may get cancer if they do not have a hysterectomy so there have been cases of women getting these done even at a very early age.

"You will hardly find women with wombs in these villages. These are villages of womb-less women," says Manda Ugale, gloom in her eyes. Sitting in her tiny house in Hajipur village, in the drought-affected Beed district of Maharashtra's Marathwada region, she struggles to talk about the painful topic.

Women in Vanjarwadi, where 50 per cent of the women have had hysterectomies, say that it is the "norm" in villages to remove the uterus after having two or three children.



The majority of these women are cane cutters and migrate to the sugar belt of western Maharashtra during the cane cutting season; with the drought intensifying, the number of migrants multiplies. *"The mukadam (contractor) is keen to have women without wombs in his group of cane cutters,"* says Satyabhama, another cane-cutter.

Lakhs of men and women from the region migrate to work as cane cutters between October and March. Contractors draw up contracts with the husband and wife counted as one unit. Cane cutting is a rigorous process and if the husband or wife takes a break for a day, the couple has to pay a fine of Rs 500 per day to the contractor for every break.

'Periods hinder work'

Menstrual periods hinder work and attract fines. The answer, in Beed, is to go in for a hysterectomy so the women no longer have them.

"After a hysterectomy, there is no chance of menstrual periods. So, there is no question of taking a break during cane cutting. We cannot afford to lose even a rupee," says Satya Bhama. Contractors say that during menstrual periods, women want a break for a day or two and work is halted.

"We have a target to complete in a limited time frame and hence we don't want women who would have periods during cane cutting," said Dada Patil, a contractor. Patil insists that he and other contractors don't force the women to have a surgery; rather, it is a choice made by their families.

Interestingly, the women said that the contractors give them an advance for a surgery and that the money is recovered from their wages, and the loans taken also ensure that they will come back to work the next year.

Achyut Borgaonkar of Tathapi, an organisation that has conducted a study on this issue, said: *"In the cane cutter community, menstrual periods are considered a problem and they think surgery is the only option to get rid of it. But this has a serious impact on the health of the women as they develop a hormonal imbalance, mental health issues, gain weight etc. We observed that even young girls at the age of 25 have undergone this surgery."*

The rationale

Bandu Ugale, Satyabhama's husband and a cane cutter himself, explains the logic behind the practice. *"A couple gets about Rs.250 after cutting a tonne of sugarcane. In a day, we cut about 3-4 tonnes of cane and in an entire season of 4-5 months a couple cuts about 300 tonnes of sugarcane. What we earn during the season is our yearly income as we don't get any work after we come back from cane cutting,"* says Ugale. *"We can't afford to take a break even for a day. We have to work even if we have health problems. There is no rest and women having periods is an additional problem,"* he explains.

Septuagenarian Vilabai says that the life of a cane cutter woman is hellish. She hints that there is repeated sexual exploitation of women by contractors and their men. *"Cane cutters have to live in cane fields or near sugar mills in a tent. There are no bathrooms and toilets. It becomes even more difficult for a woman if she has periods in these conditions,"* says the old woman. Many women in villages in this parched landscape said private medical practitioners prescribe a hysterectomy surgery even if they complain of normal abdominal pain or a white discharge.

(Courtesy: The Hindu Business Line)

Anganwadi Organisational Workshop

The Tamil Nadu state Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union (CITU) organized an organizational workshop on 23-24 March 2019 in the historic town of Mahabalipuram. Around two hundred leaders of the union from 27 districts participated in the workshop which was held as per the decision of AIFAWH to hold state level organizational workshops to streamline and consolidate the organisation. Chittiraiselvi, state Vice President welcomed the participants. The workshop was inaugurated by AR Sindhu, General Secretary, AIFAWH. She explained the purpose of the workshop on organization.

The state centre prepared a note on different aspects of organization on the basis of which different sessions were held. The first session on membership and organization was presented by Daisy, state general secretary of the union. The membership of the union increased substantially from 13,490 in 2016 to 24,674 in 2017 and to 31,647 in 2018. The union has expanded to 32 districts. The paper pointed out that there is much possibility for further consolidation and advance.

The session on democratic functioning, cadre development and financial transparency was presented by K C Gopikumar, secretary CITU and in charge of the union. The session on struggles was presented by Malati Chittibabu, state treasurer of CITU and in charge of the union. She explained the struggles at different levels and the importance of taking up local struggles. A questionnaire to facilitate discussions was also distributed.

After district wise group discussions, delegates presented the district wise situation and targets. R Karumalaiyan, Deputy General Secretary, CITU and former in charge of the union, summed up the discussions.

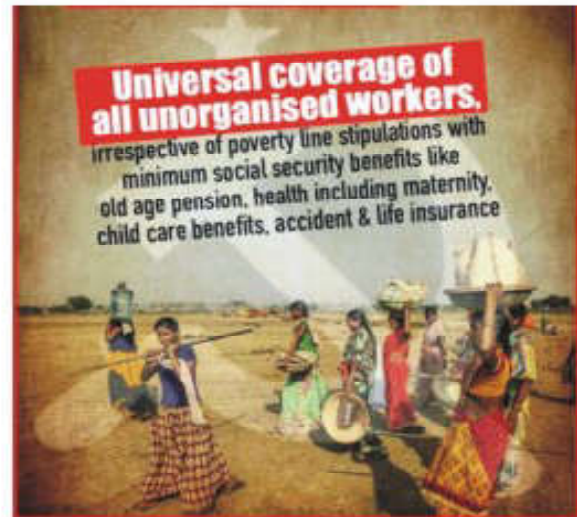
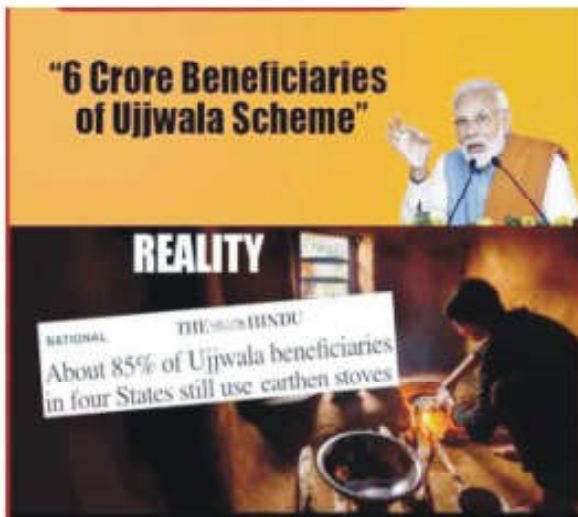
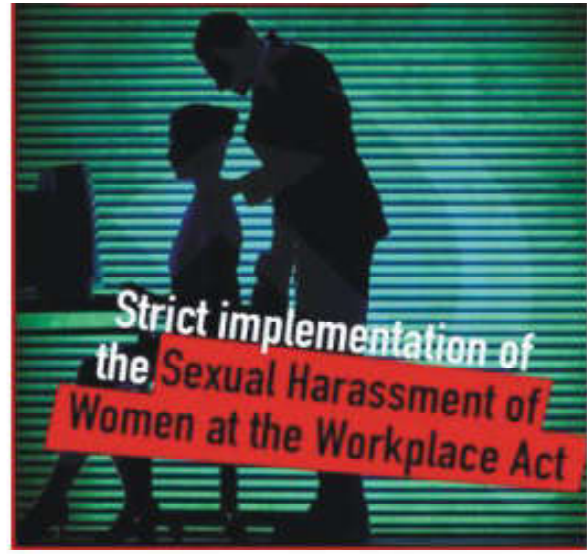
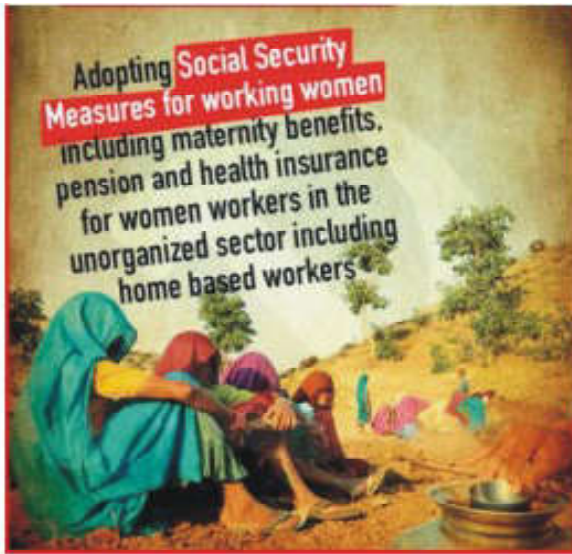
On the second day, A R Sindhu spoke about the current stage of the struggle of anganwadi workers and the working class of the country and the tasks ahead. She emphasized the role of the anganwadi employees in the Lok Sabha elections 2019 to ensure the defeat of the communal and neoliberal BJP combine and strengthen the left. She also spoke about the responsibility of the anganwadi workers and helpers in organising workers in the other sectors.

The workshop took up the following tasks:

Increase the membership to 50,000 in 2019, open bank accounts in all the districts before the state conference, form and activate project and sector level committees and prepare a list of 25 cadres per district and train them during the next year.

Vote for LEFT and SECULAR Parties

DEFEAT BJP and its ALLIES



#RememberMeWhenYouVote

I am Joseph Bhatt,
resident and activist, age 38



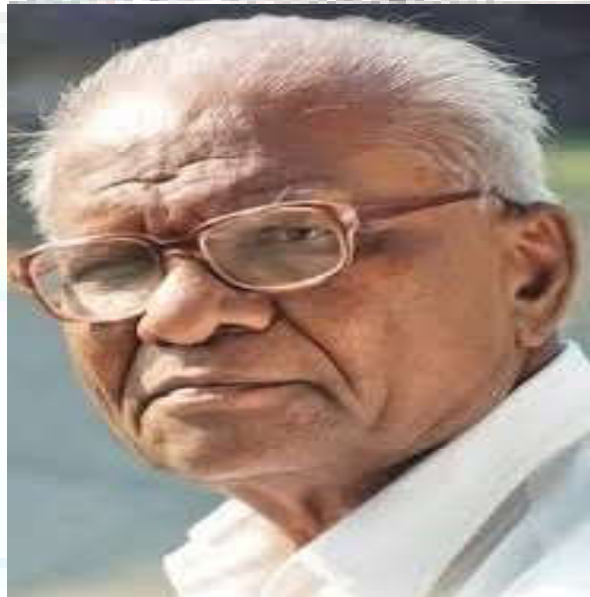
Joseph Bhatt is a resident of the
City of Los Angeles.

I am Janet Sandoval,
resident, age 55



Janet Sandoval is a resident of the
City of Los Angeles.

I am Clifford Parsons,
resident and activist, age 88



Clifford Parsons is a resident of the
City of Los Angeles.

I am Lela Martinez,
resident, age 78



Lela Martinez is a resident of the
City of Los Angeles.

#RememberMeWhenYouVote

**I am Narendra Dabholkar,
author and rationalist, age 67.**



**I was shot dead for speaking against
superstition and caste Hinduism.**

**I am Mohammed Akhlaq,
farm worker, age 52.**



**I was lynched by a mob on suspicion
of eating beef.**

**I am Asifa Bano,
nomad girl, age 8.**



**I was gang-raped and murdered to
teach my Bakerwal community a lesson.**

**I am Mohammed Afrazul,
migrant labourer, age 48.**



**I was hacked and burned to death on
allegations of 'Love Jihad'**

#RememberMeWhenYouVote

**I am Jayesh Solanki,
Dalit from Gujarat, age 21.**



**I was beaten to death for watching an
upper-caste festival.**

**I am Sheikh Naeem,
cattle trader, age 35.**



**I was lynched with three of my friends
by a mob in Jharkhand.**

**I am Pradip Rathod,
Dalit farmer, age 21.**



**I was flogged to death by upper-caste
men for riding a horse.**

**I am Pehlu Khan,
dairy farmer, age 55.**



**I was killed by 'Gau Rakshaks' for
transporting cattle.**

BJP Wants Companies to Profit from Sick People

Savera

India has a very large number of sick people. It has the highest number of TB, pneumonia, malaria, dysentery patients, especially children. It also leads the world in malnutrition with over one third of children under-weight and stunted. Infant deaths and maternal death at child birth are also very high in India.

In this situation, it would be perfectly natural to expect that government would take all measures to provide quick healthcare to all citizens free of any charges or costs. This would mean having a network of healthcare centres and doctors, nurses etc. all over the country, including remote rural areas. It would also mean having dispensaries which will give medicines whenever needed. Accompanying this, there should be hospitals so that serious cases can be treated there.

However, over the years, the government run healthcare system has been slowly hollowed out and now private hospitals and private doctors rule over everything. According to a government survey, there is one government allopathic doctor for every 10,189 people, one government hospital bed for every 2,046 people and one state-run hospital for every 90,343 people! No wonder people have to go to private doctors or diagnostic centres or hospitals for treatment – and they cost the earth. Another government survey estimated that an operation costs 6-7 times more in a private hospital than in a government hospital.

This means that lakhs of families go bankrupt and become highly indebted if just one member develops a serious illness. In fact, sickness in family is one of the biggest reasons for lakhs of people to get pushed below the poverty line.

BJP's Empty Promises on Health

The BJP in its manifesto for the 2014 general elections had promised that it would build an accessible, affordable and effective healthcare system that would reduce out of pocket spending by the people. In 2018, the Modi government announced a programme called Ayushman Bharat for providing health “coverage”, that is, insurance coverage for 50 crore people. A *swasthyabharat* (healthy India) would be *samridhabharat* (prosperous India), they proclaimed.

But the reality has turned out to be far from this idyllic vision. Like all his other promises, Modi's assurances on healthcare have turned out to be another brazen method of making profits from people's distress. And, in order to help corporate houses in this, the government is choking the public health system of funds. For a country which is plagued by both infectious and chronic diseases on a gigantic scale, and where a vast majority of people are unable to bear the cost of treatment, this policy of turning healthcare delivery into an opportunity for profit making has been disastrous.

Cuts in Health Spending

Despite so called “increases” in budget allocations, government spending on health continues to remain at about 1.4% of GDP of which about 0.3% only comes from the central government kitty. The rest is from state governments. In its last Budget for 2019-20, the Modi government imposed cuts on several key programmes.

- ◆ In the **National Health Mission (NHM)**, which provides public health services for rural and urban areas of the country, the budget allocation went down from 61% of the total health budget in 2014-15 to 49% in 2019-20.
- ◆ For the **Reproductive and Child Health (RCH)** programme which includes schemes like *Janani Suraksha Yojana* (JSY), immunisation programmes and various key disease control programmes, there has been a cut of around Rs. 4,200 crore compared to the expenditure in 2017-18.

- ◆ Funds for **Communicable diseases** were cut drastically by 27%, from Rs 2,648 crore in 2017-18 (Revised) to Rs 1,928 crore in 2018-19.
- ◆ The **Maternity Benefit Scheme**, now called the Prime Minister's *Matrutva Vandana Yojana* saw a cut of 7.5% with allocations dipping from Rs.2595 crore in 2017-18 (RE) to Rs.2400 crore in 2018-19.
- ◆ Although the government announced that 24 new **Medical Colleges** will be set up by upgrading District Hospitals, the allocation for this has decreased from Rs. 3300 crore in 2017-18 (RE) to Rs. 2888 crore in 2018-19 (BE), a decline of about 12 percent.

A similar approach has been followed by the BJP led state governments. In 2017-18, despite the worsening encephalitis situation, UP's BJP government, led by Yogi Adityanath, slashed the budget for the encephalitis programme from Rs. 10.19 crores to just Rs. 5.78 crores. Small wonder that 3-4 extremely sick infants were packed per ICU bed, oxygen supply ran out because of non-payment of dues and in one horrific week in August 2018, 72 children died.

Ayushman Bharat

PM Modi proclaimed that the new 'National Health Protection Scheme' (NHPS), would give 50 crore poor people health insurance coverage worth Rs. 5 lakh each. As is typical with all Modi schemes, the announcements look good until you look at the details.

The scheme is applicable only for in-patients, that is, for hospital admissions. Over two thirds of health spending by families is on non-hospitalised conditions, mostly on medicines. So, the scheme will not benefit you unless you are seriously ill.

The biggest beneficiaries of this scheme will be big private hospitals and insurance companies since insurance covered people will be forced to go to them, where they will be over-treated and over-charged as happens in all health insurance cases. The government will be transferring premium funds to the coffers of these companies as in the *Fasal Bima Yojana*. The earlier *Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana* (RSBY) has shown the same trend and has increased rather than decreased out of pocket expenditure.

Private Hospital Profiteering

As several recent cases have revealed, the booming network of private corporate owned hospitals have become a menace because of their extreme profiteering from distressed patients and their families. One example of this was a 7-year old child who died after treatment for 15 days in Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon, but his heartbroken family was billed Rs.16 lakh. This is not a unique case. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) analysed hospital bills and brought out a report in February 2018 exposing huge profiteering by corporate hospitals. An analysis of bills from four reputed private hospitals in Delhi and NCR revealed that they are making profits of up to 1,737% on drugs, consumables and diagnostics, which account for about half of a patient's bill. The Modi government responded by removing the chairperson of NPPA.

That the BJP government – both central and state - stands with the corporate hospitals is further shown by the fact that they have refused to vigorously implement the Clinical Establishment Act, 2010 which is meant to regulate private hospitals. They have not even notified the essential standards under the Act.

Rising Drug Prices

It is estimated that in India nearly 3.68 crore people fall below the poverty line due to their expenditure on medicines, which constitutes more than 70% of the total out of pocket expenditure on healthcare.

Under the Modi government, a concerted drive has been launched to decontrol drug (medicine) prices in order to favour pharma companies. The current Drug Price Control Order (DPCO) is operational since May 2013. Out of 64 months since its implementation, in many months the point to point inflation rate of medicines has been higher than the general inflation. Since November 2016, we have experienced higher inflation in medicine prices compared to general inflation. In April 2017, NITI Aayog recommended that the Drug Price Control Order be delinked from the National List of Essential Medicines, which means that prices of all essential medicines will no longer be controlled and they will become more expensive. It

has also proposed that the Central government can exempt any drug from price control if there is “sufficient competition” – thereby opening the way for prices of over 350 essential medicines to be removed from price control.

All this means that prices of common drugs will go up. There is also a proposal that only prices of such essential medicines would be controlled which are higher by 10% or more compared to the current ceiling prices. If this proposal is accepted, around 40 per cent of the drugs that are currently under price control will go out of it.

Also, under the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana, a scheme to provide drugs at affordable prices, the allocations have been nearly halved from 2018-19. So much for the commitment to provide affordable medicines!

Declining Public Health Facilities

The existing health infrastructure is meanwhile going through rapid degeneration due to lack of funds and political backing from the Modi government.

The shortfalls in sub centres (SCs), primary health centres (PHCs) and community health centres (CHCs) were 19%, 22% and 30% respectively as on March 31, 2017, according to Rural Health Statistics (2017). Many of the centres lack electricity or running water and others are in dilapidated buildings. Lack of approach roads prevents ambulances from reaching them.

A similar condition exists in terms of health personnel functioning from these centres. There is a debilitating shortage of key health personnel – 75% shortfall of obstetricians and gynaecologists, 85% shortfall of surgeons, 86% shortfall of physicians and 83% shortfall of paediatricians at Community Health Centres. Health infrastructure across the country is in poor condition as was highlighted by the CAG report in its audit of NRHM. Nearly 25% of the Sub Centres are without electric supply, 17% without regular water supply and 10% without any all-weather motorable approach road. About 6,371 SCs are functioning without Auxilliary Nurses and Midwives (ANMs). Even if the posts have been sanctioned, the positions are lying vacant, for instance, 14% positions for ANMs at SCs and PHCs are lying vacant.

Far from building a *swasthya* and *samriddha* India, the above summary shows that the country is being pushed inexorably in the direction of a completely privatised healthcare system run by greedy corporates. This will not bring *swasthya* or good health to the people but it will surely bring *samriddhi* to the corporate houses.

Another tall claim made by the NDA in its manifesto was to establish AIIMS-like institutes in every State. Till date over 20 such institutions have been announced in a phased manner, but the projects under Phase I still have huge deficiencies and suffer from inadequate facilities.

The Performance Audit by CAG (2018) reports that besides a time overrun of about four to five years in various packages of six new AIIMS, shortage of faculty posts in different AIIMS ranged from 55% to 83% while shortage of non-faculty posts ranged from 77% to 97%; 1,318 pieces of equipment with an estimated cost of Rs.454 crore remained undelivered as on 31 March 2017, for periods up to 25 months from the due date of delivery; out of 42 departments, six to 14 speciality, super-speciality and other departments have not become functional; and, out of 7 AIIMS proposed in the 5th phase, only one got approval in July 2016 while no approval has been given in the 6th phase.

Health Staff on Starvation Wages

In addition, there is increasing contractualisation of the health workforce with very low remuneration but enormous work pressure. The backbone of the primary health care system – the ASHA and Aanganwadi workers, have been demanding regularisation and status as a worker but the government has conveniently ignored the demands. They are expected to work round the clock providing the most important healthcare and childcare services as ‘voluntary’ workers and activists! Repeated assurances to increase their wages have been made and betrayed by the Modi government. This shows that Modi’s BJP government is not really interested in a healthy India – all they are interested in is a healthy and prosperous corporate India.

The Facts Speak for Themselves

Gujarat Model

The Gujarat government expenditure for **health care** and family welfare services is less than 1% of GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product), while the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends at least 5%. Gujarat's spending on health and family welfare is just 5% of its total budget.

Gujarat is deteriorating fast in almost all health indicators. Forty-five percent of children in the state are undernourished and **69 per cent** of infant deaths were from neonatal deaths, higher than the national average of **67.60 per cent**. Gujarat ranked tenth in high Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) with **30 deaths** per 1,000 live births, according to NITI Aayog's 2016 report. Gujarat's healthcare performance, it is not model in any sense of the term, as it was ranked 9th among 22 big states.

The Annual Status Education Report data indicates that 65.2% of students enrolled in class 8 could not do division, the most difficult yardstick of evaluation and 62.4% pupils could not read an English sentence. With a poor record in even the mother tongue, students were found struggling to grasp English. 45% workers in Gujarat are illiterate or studied only up to the fifth standard with the quality of education very poor. The quality of higher education is also leading to the rising number of unemployed engineers and science graduates.

The state leaders boast of the highest workforce participation in the state. However, only 6.8% of the workers are in the formal sector. Close to 93-94% workers are in informal and traditional sectors, with low incomes and low social security. The **wage rates** in Gujarat are almost the **lowest** in the major states of India, with the **rank declining over the past decade**. One of the greatest challenges for the state is to create a massive number of productive jobs with decent incomes for the youth. Various agitations in Gujarat emanate from this failure.

Agriculture is suffering from **low minimum support price**, and declining public investment in agriculture. In addition, this growth is neither sustainable (ground water, a major source of irrigation is depleting badly without adequate efforts to recharge) nor equitable. **Agricultural wages** for the rising number of agricultural labour are among **lowest in the country**.

The tribal population is the worst affected despite the fake claims of development and growth. Thousands are forced to migrate, to squat on urban roads or to live in make-shift huts in rural areas without even basic facilities. No wonder the Gujarat high court has rebuked the state government frequently, asking it not to forget that tribals are also a part of the state's population

40% of the population is below the multi-dimensional **poverty line**. Though there are a number of central and state pro-poor programmes, their implementation is very poor. According to World Bank data. Gujarat is home to 60 million people, of whom one-sixth are poor. The so called growth in Gujarat is elitist, and is not reaching the masses. In short, the hype created around the Gujarat model is hollow and fake.

Several experts have pointed out that the Gujarat model is a *"classic case of a corporate-led development model facilitated by the state which involves increasing prosperity for the rich, but very little benefit... to the wider population. There are roads, big malls, there are big cars, but if you look at the people, the support that people used to get from the government [before BJP came to power], the BJP government has reduced it to half."*

At the same time, Gujarat may be called a hub of **communal violence** and disharmony. The 2002 pogrom, when Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister and the recent Una lynching, may be remembered.

Kerala Model

The importance and tradition of **education in Kerala** is underscored by the state's ranking as among the most literate in the country. Kerala is on par with other developed countries on the Human Development Index.

Kerala stands as the **Best Governed State** in the country among large states for the third consecutive year since 2016, according to Public Affairs Center. It is the only state in India to get UN acclaim for the highest Human Development Index.

Kerala's achievements in the **health sector** have often been cited as role models for the country. Some of its health indices match with those of the developed countries. The State has a better health standard with low birth and death rate, rapidly declining population growth rate, high level of acceptance of family planning methods and increased life expectancy. Government of Kerala's patient friendly hospital mission AARDRAM provides quality services at all health levels.

Restoration of **agricultural prosperity** is another achievement of this government. Kerala has increased its arable land area with determined efforts, with the participation of the people. Paddy cultivation area is raised by 34,000 acres. Uncultivated areas are being put to use. Indigenous brand of rice cultivated by Padashekhara Samithi (farmers forum) has become popular now. Vegetable cultivation rose from 6 lakh tonnes to 10 lakh tonnes. Milk production has also increased significantly.

Social Security pensions were distributed in a time-bound manner. Financial help of Rs 390 crore was distributed from the chief minister's rehabilitation fund in the last two years.

Rejuvenation of public sector undertakings was the significant achievement of this government. These had been dens of corruption and nepotism and suffered losses during the five-year regime of the UDF. Around 15 PSUs have become profit-making industrial units within two years of the LDF rule.

The UDF regime had imposed a blanket ban on **new recruitments**. When the government lifted the ban and asked all departments to report vacancies to the public service commission, 70,000 posts were filled in a span of two years. 13,000 new posts were also created.

The **minimum wage** in Kerala of Rs. 600 per day is the **highest** among all states.

For the first time a **department for women and children** is being set up in Kerala to ensure the safety and security of women. Pink Patrol, run by women police, is considered as a service for women in cities. The patrolling vehicles are equipped with GPS-enabled software. Nirbhaya 24X7 help desk, women helpline numbers, district women cells by women CIs, etc have also been made operational.

Dalit youth have been made priests in traditional temples. Though there was some isolated resistance from caste Hindus and the Sangh Parivar, the step was widely welcomed as a measure taken towards further social reforms. It is the lone state to allocate funds in the budget for **SC/ST and tribal people**, proportionate to their population.

A **Welfare fund** meant for migrant labourers is launched for the first time in Kerala, under the present political dispensation. Shelters at important centres have also been set up.

Budget allocation for the **public distribution system** has been hiked considerably — Rs 150 crore was allocated over and above the fund earmarked for this. So with government intervention, blackmarketeers and hoarders could be kept away. *Maveli* store, *Neethi* store and civil supplies outlets have been strengthened and prices were brought down.

The Government relief work during the floods of 2018 was remarkable and relief reached people immediately.

While most of the states in India witnessed communal violence in the name of cow vigilantism, Kerala stands out by the lack of these as the government intervened promptly to maintain law and order. No communal riot was reported in the state for the last two years.

Women's Organisations Protest Against Unjust Disenfranchisement of Women

Memorandum Submitted to CEC

The undersigned national women's organisations are deeply distressed that millions of women in our country have not been registered to vote even though they are aged over 18 years. A joint memorandum regarding this matter has been submitted to the Chief Election Commissioner. The 2011 census suggests that by 2019 the total population of women above 18 years will be 97.2 per cent of the total men's population. But the Election Commission data for 2019 shows that women voters are only 92.7 per cent of the male voters indicating a 4.5 per cent shortfall of women voters. This 4.5 per cent translates into a staggering 21 million women who will be denied their right to vote just because their names are not registered in the voters' lists.

Twenty-one million missing women voters is equivalent to every single woman not being allowed to vote in any one of the states of Jharkhand or Haryana or Telangana or Kerala or Chhattisgarh! Twenty-one million translates into 38,000 missing women voters in every constituency in India! The largest number of unregistered women are in Uttar Pradesh (6.8 million), Maharashtra (2.3 million) and Rajasthan (1.2 million). This means that on an average 85,000 women voters will not be allowed to vote in every single constituency in Uttar Pradesh!

This disenfranchisement of women voters is an assault on their democratic right as citizens of the country. This is unacceptable and we appeal to the Election Commission to take immediate steps to rectify this injustice.

We hope that the Election Commission will pay attention to this matter on an urgent basis.

All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)

All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA)

National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW)

All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch (AIDMAM)

Guild of Service (GoS)

Joint Women's Programme (JWP)

War Widows' Association (WWA)

National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR)



Modi Government's Parting Gift

At the end of its 5 year term, The BJP Modi government had two parting gifts for BSNL employees. One was non-payment of wage in March 2019, in violation of the provision of Payment of Wages Act, to create apprehension among 1.68 lakh employees about the uncertainty of the future of public sector BSNL and to prepare ground for the second gift - VRS to 45,000 employees, to slice down BSNL staff strength by 30 percent. These are not without reason; crony capitalism is in full display to favour Ambani's Jio.

The BSNL Employees Union (BSNLEU) informs that revenue earnings of all the telecom companies dipped drastically due to the tariff war initiated by Reliance Jio. BSNL is also facing a financial crunch and failed to pay salary to its employees. The tariff war is expected to continue for some more time and till such time the public sector BSNL needs government support.

But, despite BSNL making an operational profit, the government is not extending any financial support to it. On the contrary, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) of the Government of India is not allowing BSNL to take bank loans for its operational expenditures despite the fact that BSNL's total debt is only Rs.13,900 crore as against Rs.1,20,000 crore debt of Vodafone Idea; Airtel's Rs.1,13,000 crore and, interestingly enough, Reliance Jio's reportedly over Rs.2,00,000 crore. Yet, the government has allowed public sectors banks to provide huge loans to private telecom companies, but not to BSNL.

BSNLEU alleges that the stringent conditions imposed by DoT to cripple BSNL financially are to create a fear psychosis among the employees to force them to opt for VRS, when implemented. Exactly so. On 3 April, DoT announced its intension to slice down the BSNL staff strength by 45,000 employees - 30% of the present strength, through enforced VRS and informed that a note to Cabinet would be moved soon for this purpose. *"We will try and move it at the earliest, once we get the clearance from the Election Commission,"* the official said"; reported *The Hindu*. The reason given in public is the *"reported net loss of Rs.7,993 crore, although income from services had grown to Rs.22,668 crore."*

Strongly opposing DoT's move to slice down BSNL staff strength and contesting its contention that BSNL has been facing financial crisis due to overstaffing, BSNLEU said that the BSNL is facing financial crisis due to Modi government's pro-Reliance Jio and anti-BSNL policies. BSNL earned a net profit of Rs.10,000 crore in 2004-05 when 1 lakh more employees were working in it; and has earned operational profit in of 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 financial years.

The problem started with Reliance Jio starting its operations in September 2016, indulging in predatory pricing to force its competitors to close their operations. It may be noted that the then Secretary of DoT J.S. Deepak was shunted out only because he opposed the predatory pricing of Reliance Jio.

The TRAI has also helped Reliance Jio in a big way. It changed its own definition of 'predatory pricing', declared in May, 2003, and slashed down the IUC (Interconnect Usage Charge) by 57% in October, 2017, which benefited Reliance Jio to the tune of Rs.1,000 crore, hitting hard the older telecom companies. Contrary to the assurance given by the Union Cabinet, at the time of the formation of the BSNL, that all steps would be taken to safeguard the financial viability of BSNL, it is not allotting 4G spectrum to BSNL despite the assurance given by the union communication minister to all unions in January 2018, as a calculated move of the Modi government to clip the wings of BSNL.

BSNL has vacant lands throughout the country worth more than Rs.1 lakh crore. BSNL has sought the approval of the government to generate revenue from these vacant lands through renting and leasing. However, the government has not given the necessary approval for more than one year now.

For BSNL's financial revival, its employees unions are demanding that the Government immediately allot 4G spectrum to BSNL; extend soft loan for expansion and modernisation of its network; and give approval to BSNL to monetize its vacant lands.

(Inputs: BSNLEU)

Homage to Comrade Ramanika Gupta



The Centre of Indian Trade Unions is deeply grieved on the passing away of the veteran trade union leader Comrade Ramanika Gupta in the afternoon of 26th March, 2019 after a prolonged illness, at the age of 88.

During her entire lifetime, she stood and resolutely fought for the economic and social justice for the workers and socially oppressed sections, particularly the Adivasis and Dalits.

Comrade Ramanika Gupta's biggest contribution was the liberation of coal workers, particularly the loading and unloading workers, from the stranglehold of coal mafias in the

Hazaribagh coalfield in the present day Jharkhand, facing personal attacks by the hired criminals; and forming Coalfield Labour Union and spreading the same in several states including the present day Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and later merging the same with CITU unions.

Comrade Ramanika Gupta was an office bearer of CITU state committee and working committee member of CITU and also of the All India Coal Worker Federation.

She was a member of CPI(M)'s Jharkhand state committee. She was two times MLC and later was elected as an MLA from the Mandu Assembly constituency in Hazaribagh district of undivided Bihar.

Comrade Ramanika Gupta was a prolific writer in Hindi, exponent of Dalit Literatures, writer of several books and received several prestigious literary awards. She was also active in Janwadi Lekhak Sangh.

Comrade Ramanika Gupta worked for the rights and welfare of the tribals; formed a separate Trust and worked vigorously in it.

In her death, the workers and down-trodden sections of the people have lost a strong voice for their rights and upliftment.

CITU pays respectful homage to the departed leader Comrade Ramanika Gupta and conveys heartfelt condolence to her comrade and the members of her family.

Comrade Ramanika Gupta Red Salute.

Com Ramanika Gupta Amar Rahe.

More than 200 Writers Appeal to Citizens

Below we reproduce the appeal issued by more than 200 writers on April 1, 2019, urging the citizens of the country to vote against hate politics and to vote for an equal and diverse India.

THE upcoming election finds our country at the crossroads. Our constitution guarantees *all* its citizens equal rights, the freedom to eat, pray and live as they choose, freedom of expression and the right to dissent. But in the last few years, we have seen citizens being lynched or assaulted or discriminated against because of their community, caste, gender, or the region they come from. Hate politics has been used to divide the country; create fear; and exclude more and more people from living as full-fledged citizens. Writers, artists, filmmakers, musicians and other cultural practitioners have been hounded, intimidated, and censored. Anyone who questions the powers-that-be is in danger of being harassed or arrested on false and ridiculous charges.

All of us want this to change. We don't want rationalists, writers and activists to be hounded or assassinated. We want stern measures against violence in word or deed against women, dalits, adivasis and minority communities. We want resources and measures for jobs, education, research, healthcare and equal opportunities for all. Most of all, we want to safeguard our diversity and let democracy flourish.

How do we do this? How do we bring about the change we need so urgently? There are many things we need to do and can do. But there is a critical first step.

The first step, the one we can take soon, is to vote out hate politics. Vote out the division of our people; vote out inequality; vote against violence, intimidation and censorship. **This is the only way we can vote for an India that renews the promises made by our constitution. This is why we appeal to all citizens to vote for a diverse and equal India.**

The writers include Pradnya Daya Pawar, Romila Thapar, K N Panikkar, Nayantara Sahgal, Amitav Ghosh, Keki Daruwalla, Shashi Deshpande, Girish Karnad, Paul Zacharia Akeel Bilgrami, Anand Teltumbde, Jerry Pinto, Anita Nair, K Satchidanandan.

Read and Subscribe to

The Voice of the Working Woman

Single Copy: Rs. 10/-, Annual Subscription: Rs. 100/-

Send **MO/DD** favouring 'Centre of Indian Trade Unions'

to **The Manager, The Voice of the Working Woman,**
13-A, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi 110002, Ph: 011-23221306, email: aiccww@yahoo.com

Send money **directly through the Bank,**
A/c Name – The Voice of the Working Woman,
a/c no. – 0158101019570, Canara Bank, Branch-DDU Marg, New Delhi-02
IFSC Code – CNRB0000158, MICR Code - 110015005

please inform us immediately through call or email.

Vindictive Externment

Hon'ble Chief Minister
Govt of Maharashtra
Mumbai

18th April 2019

Sub: Vindictive externment order from Nasik, Thane and other areas issued by Nasik City Police to Dr Dhondiram Limbaji Karad, National Vice President CITU and President Maharashtra State committee of CITU leading the Nasik Workers' Union under section 51 of Maharashtra Police Regulations, 1951

Dear Sir,

I urge your pointed intervention to the utterly vindictive action by Nasik City Police in the form of externment order under section 51 of Maharashtra Police Regulations, 1951, on 17-04-2019 to Dr Dhondiram Limbaji Karad, National Vice President and President Maharashtra State committee of CITU, leading the Nasik Workers' Union for undertaking lawful trade union activities.

It is an utterly vindictive action by the concerned police administration at the behest of handful of industry-owners against thousands of poor industrial workers targeting their leader, Dr D L Karad the national level leader of a national trade union centre-Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and also a leader of Communist Party of India (Marxist) for taking up the legitimate demands of the workers and agitating over their issue collectively very much within the confine of their democratic and constitutional rights.

Charges against Dr Karad, narrated in four-pages long externment order dated 17-04-2019 are mostly related to organizing morcha of workers, agitations etc on their demands and complaints of labour law violations, all of which are very much within the ambit of the constitutional rights of the workers and their trade unions. The narrative of these activities in the concerned order is packaged with some manufactured complaints of threats of violence supported by statement of one unnamed 'SECRET WITNESS' by the concerned police authority, quite obviously at the instance of the employers' lobby. The entire exercise by the concerned police administration is visibly non-transparent thereby exposing its utterly vindictive intent. That too, the exercise for internment of a CITU and CPI(M) leader has been undertaken at a time when the country is in the process of Parliamentary elections and a CPI(M) candidate is contesting from Dindori constituency within which Nasik region also falls; the motive may be to disrupt the electoral campaign by the Left.

In this context, I urge you to go through the details of pending cases against Dr Karad, mostly on fabricated charges. Since 1990 till date, numerous cases were foisted on Dr Karad but none can be proved and in many cases he got acquitted. During the same period, numerous agreements/settlements were arrived at as per Industrial Disputes Act between the management of various industries and the CITU unions under the leadership of Dr Karad. During the same time span, neither did the police administration nor the Labour Department take any action in addressing the gross violations of all labour laws particularly in respect of Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, Minimum Wages Act, EPF and ESI related legislations etc. In such a background extra-proactive initiative to target Dr Karad and the unions led by him through vindictive measures of various kinds and manufacturing false and fabricated cases against Dr Karad and other union officials based on the statement made by the employers lobby speaks volumes about the bias and vindictive intent of the local administration.

However, the CITU records its vehement protest against such vindictive externment order against its leader Dr Karad and urges you to please intervene and rescind such externment order forthwith, while prevailing upon the local administration to act democratically and impartially to ensure pursuit of the democratic and trade union rights of the workers who are always at the receiving end and suppressed despite their dedicated service to nation in generating wealth, GDP and also profit for the employers. With regards,

Yours sincerely,
(Tapan Sen)
General Secretary

Meet Comrade S. Varalakshmi Our Candidate From Chikkaballapur LS Constituency of Karnataka

Com S. Varalakshmi is a well known militant leader of the toiling masses of Karnataka. She caught the imagination of the Karnataka and the whole country in March 2017, when, under her leadership, over 20 thousand Anganwadi workers occupied the road for 4 days and nights leading to the Vidhana Soudha, seat of power in Karnataka. She pioneered the State-wide organisation of Anganwadi and other scheme (Mid Day Meal and ASHA) workers, bringing their demands to the fore front.

Varalakshmi is a national Vice President of CITU. She is currently President of the Karnataka State committee of CITU and was earlier General Secretary of Karnataka CITU.

She is a member of the State Committee of the CPI(M) and is contesting from Chikkaballapur LS Constituency of Karnataka as the CPI(M) candidate.

She is also the first woman candidate from any national party to contest in this LS constituency, which was carved out in 1977.

Com S. Varalakshmi hails from a poor family of a backward community in a village in undivided Kolar District (current Chikkaballapur District was part of it). Her family moved to Kumbalagodu on the outskirts of Bangalore, in search of livelihood. She completed her High School education and joined a factory as a worker in 1989, simultaneously pursuing her college studies in the evening. As a worker she came into contact with CITU, and organised a union in her factory. She also spread her activities to neighbouring factories as a CITU activist.



In the struggle in another factory in 1993

she was not only brutally attacked by police, but was also jailed. On her return from jail she had to face serious social problems. Undeterred, she continued her union organising activities, resulting in her dismissal from her factory in 1994.

She then joined CITU as a full time activist. Here started a saga of strenuous organising work, militant struggles and inspiring leadership. Though as a woman TU activist she had to face many serious risks and challenges, she remained determined.

She also participated in the militant long drawn struggle in Velliappa Textiles in which workers were fired upon and 35 criminal cases were foisted on activists including Com Varalaxmi, which were only withdrawn only when a Judicial Enquiry report indicted the police action. She also participated in the militant BPL struggle. She had to face brutal attacks, underground life and imprisonment in these struggles.

She was elected to the Gram Panchayat in 1994. She has been a member of CPI(M) State Committee since 1998 and Secretariat Member since 2012.

Varalaxmi has participated in many struggles of the people in the constituency including implementation of the Perennial Irrigation Project based on Dr Paramashivayya Committee, issues of handloom workers and silk producers.

She had to face a brutal lathi charge while participating in the siege of Udupi Krishna Mutt opposing its obnoxious practices of Madesnana (Shudras rolling over leftovers of Brahmins feasting) and Panktibedha (of Caste discrimination in Temple feast).

Varalakshmi is a militant fighter for the rights of the working people whom she can represent ably in the Lok Sabha.



Comrade BT Ranadive on Elections

On 6th April 2019 was the 29th death anniversary of the one and only Comrade BT Ranadive, the founder president of CITU and the ideologue of the working class movement.

CITU recalls what he had written three decades ago, in 1989, before the elections to the 9th Lok Sabha, that is still relevant today.

“The election battle for advancing the cause of democracy, national unity and the interest of the toiling masses of all communities, demands that the reactionary forces of communalism must be isolated and their game must be exposed during the election campaign.”

“The last five years have shown that the CPI (M) and the Left Front Governments led by it and left parties have waged a consistent battle for the defence of the interests of the people by innumerable strikes and peasant agitations, defending national unity. “

“It (strengthening our independence and sovereignty) will be realized by the working class, that the CPI(M) and the left parties have got a consistent and cohesive policy of defending the interests of the people and advancing democracy and protecting the nation against divisive forces.

The CITU therefore calls upon the entire working class to fully support the candidates of the left parties and secure for the people total victory in the election.

The CITU once more calls upon the entire working class and people to ensure that the combination of the left and secular opposition forces secures an overwhelming victory in the election struggles so that the people can have a government of their choice and move forward decisively to solve the urgent problems facing the country.”

(November 1989)