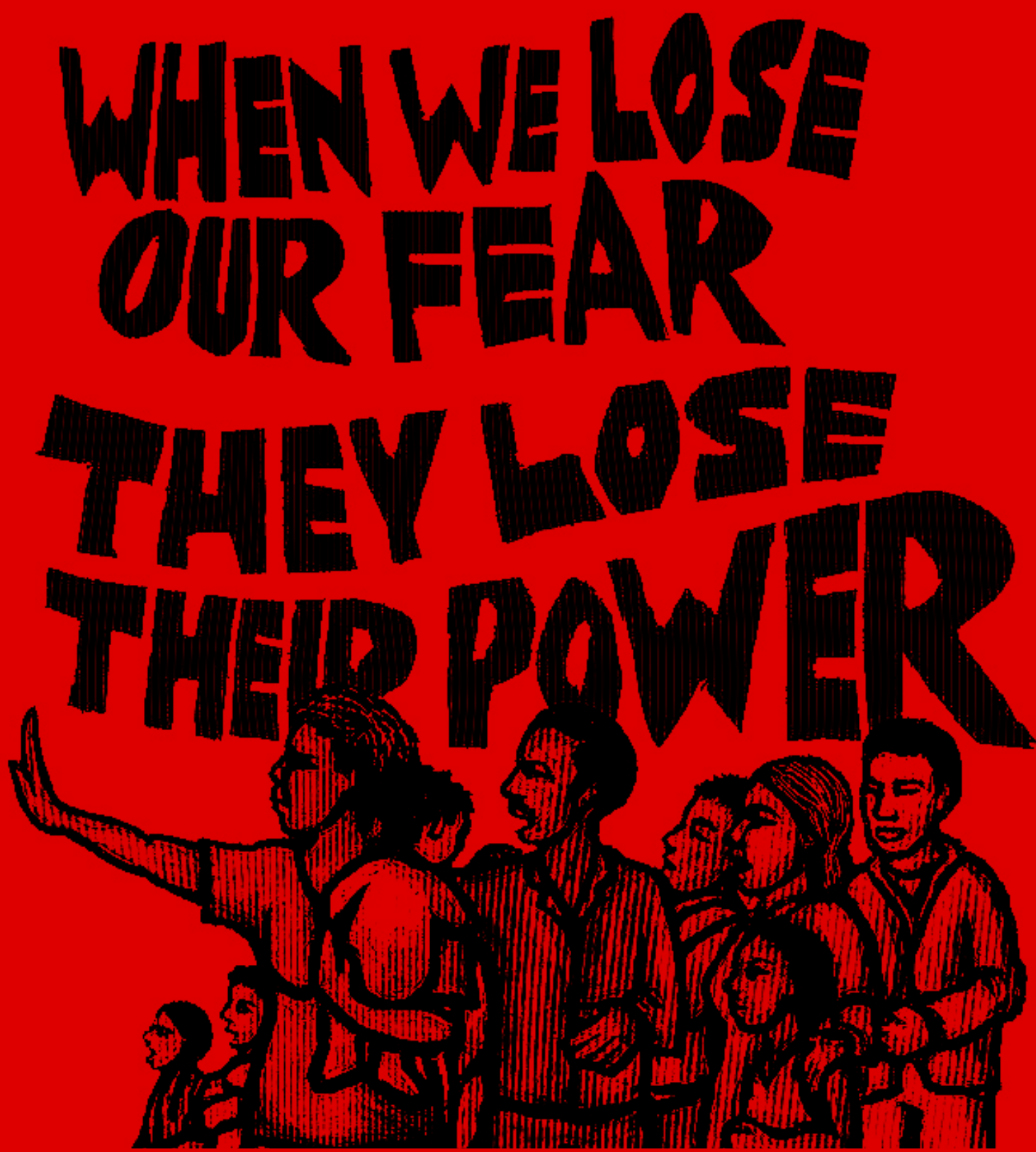


# **The Voice of the Working Woman**



PLATFORM OF CENTRAL TRADE UNIONS AND  
INDEPENDENT FEDERATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

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A stylized illustration of a crowd of people in black silhouette against a green background. The crowd is holding up various symbols: a hammer and sickle, a red lotus flower, a red flame, and a red flag. The text 'NATIONWIDE GENERAL STRIKE' is written in large, white, hand-painted letters across the center of the crowd. Below the main text, the date '26 NOV' is written in black on a green rectangular background.

# NATIONWIDE GENERAL STRIKE

26 NOV

**AGAINST THE ANTI/WORKER ANTI/FARMER  
ANTI NATIONAL BJP GOVERNMENT**



# ***The Voice of the Working Woman***

Monthly Journal of the  
AICCWW(CITU)

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# **EDITORIAL**

The Voice of the Working Woman extends revolutionary greetings to the workers around the world including in our country, on the occasion of the Great November Revolution. 7th November, as we all know, is the 103rd anniversary of the November Revolution in Russia; the Revolution that ushered in a State led by the working class, for the first time in the history of humankind.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that came into existence after the Revolution showed to the entire world how, a country led by the hitherto exploited working class, could eradicate unemployment, illiteracy, poverty etc in a country which was then industrially backward. The USSR under the leadership of the working class took big strides in many fields including science, arts, sports, culture, health, education etc to compete and overtake the most developed capitalist country in the world, the USA.

The Great November Revolution assumes added significance today, when the capitalist class and the governments representing their interests in many countries in the world, are mounting attacks on the basic rights of the working class, particularly their right to organisation and collective actions. Capitalism is in deep crisis which predated Covid 19 and has been further aggravated by it, is unable to find a way to protect its profits and come out of the crisis, except through such attacks. In the process it has no hesitation to attack the democratic and human rights of the people and the workers. It is ready to use and deepen the prevalent religious, regional, cultural and other differences between people to divide them, to prevent united resistance against the policies.

It is such attacks that we see across the world in all countries having governments that serve corporate interests. It is what we see in India today. The BJP government led by Modi is totally unconcerned of the miseries of the people who have lost their jobs and income due to the lockdown. Instead of providing any relief, it has enacted the labour codes that seek to push our workers into slave like conditions; it has enacted the Farm Acts that would expose our farmers to the vagaries of international markets and to throw them to the mercy of the big corporate agribusinesses.

# ***“The working class cannot rest till the present policy regime is defeated and reversed.”***

Gods, faith, love, eating habits, and cultural practices etc are used to divide people. State machinery is used to threaten and intimidate those who oppose its policies. It has no qualms in deceiving people through false slogans and promises to get their votes and implement policies that deprive and deny them their livelihood, income, their basic workplace and democratic rights, after coming to power.

Neoliberalism, meant to protect capitalist profits at the expense of the workers and toiling people has become discredited across the world today. Capitalism is increasingly losing legitimacy in the eyes of the people, particularly the young. The inability of most of the capitalist countries, including those in Europe, the USA etc in containing Covid 19 and protecting the lives of their people, has once again exposed the failure of the capitalist system. In stark contrast, the socialist countries including China, where the virus was first detected, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea etc having robust public health care systems, have proved the superiority of the socialist system in protecting the health, lives of the people. They have also been able to bring back their economies towards growth and protect the livelihood of the people.

When the working class of India goes on the 20th countrywide general strike against the neoliberal policies on 26th November 2020, it is important to highlight this difference between the pro corporate capitalist system and the forces that seek to protect it and the pro worker pro people socialist system and the forces that support it. While focussing on the immediate demands it is also important to place the alternatives before the workers and the people. It is necessary to create the confidence that there exists an alternative; it is both necessary to fight for it and it is possible to achieve it.

On the shoulders of the class conscious working class rests the responsibility of taking this message to the workers across the country and preparing them for much higher forms of resistance and struggles in the coming days. The working class cannot rest till the present policy regime is defeated and reversed.



# ***Bringing Down Inequalities***

*Written by K Hemalata*

The working class is all geared up for a massive countrywide general strike on 26th November 2020. The Declaration adopted in the online joint national convention of workers has strongly condemned the BJP government's attacks on the basic workplace, democratic and Constitutional rights of the workers and the people of our country. While focusing on the seven point demands of the workers and the toiling people, the country wide general strike, called by the national convention, is also against the government's attacks on the democratic and Constitutional rights.

The Modi led BJP government's penchant for brushing aside Constitutional procedures and Parliamentary norms and practices is now well established. Totally disregarding the Constitution, it abrogated Article 360 and 35 (A), dissolved the state of Jammu and Kashmir and divided it into two union territories. During the last monsoon session of Parliament, it suspended 8 MPs for exercising their right to demand division in the House and passed the three Farm Bills. The three labour codes were passed by Parliament in the absence of the entire opposition. These are only a few examples. There are many others.

The BJP government is resorting to such violations of the Constitution and Parliamentary norms to achieve its twin objectives of carrying forward neoliberalism and fulfilling the RSS project of establishing 'Hindu Rashtra'. It has the support and blessings of the big corporates, domestic as well as foreign, as it suits them well. The neoliberal agenda is for their profit maximisation and amassing of wealth, while the 'Hindu Rashtra' project of RSS divides society, disrupts unity and weakens united struggles against neoliberal policies through communal polarisation.

The attacks on the Constitutional and fundamental rights have been criticised by all democratic and progressive sections of the people including the trade unions. In general the debates and discussions on the Constitutional rights of citizens, freedom of speech, the rights of minorities, etc have been attracting public attention. The BJP government, which is brazenly attacking the constitutionally mandated rights with impunity, cannot be expected to even glance at the directives issued by the Constitution to bring down socio economic inequalities.

The abrogation by the BJP government, of the responsibility of the State in bringing down income inequalities, enshrined in the Directive Principles of our Constitution, has not received due attention in general. According to Section 38 (2), 'the State shall, in particular, strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and work to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations'. While the government, particularly under neoliberalism, has totally withdrawn from this Constitutional responsibility, 'minimising inequalities' is also not being raised as a prominent demand.

It is widely acknowledged that inequalities, globally as well as in our country, have been widening under the neoliberal regime. This has gained pace under the Modi led BJP regime with inequalities in the country rising to vulgar levels. Even during the lockdown, when entire production came to a halt, GDP registered negative growth, and millions of working people lost their jobs and incomes, a few corporate associates of this BJP government saw their incomes and wealth soar to new heights.

## ***“The demand to bring down income inequalities as per the Directive Principles of the Constitution should be made one of the major demands of the working class and the people.”***

According to the Wealth Hurun India RichList 2020 the wealth of Mukesh Ambani, the richest man in the country, has been growing by Rs 90 crore per hour since the March lockdown. His wealth increased by Rs 277000 crores to Rs 658400 crore, an increase of 73%, over last year. Mukesh Ambani's wealth is now more than the combined wealth of the next 5 in the list of the richest in India. Shiv Nadar, founder of HCL, is in third place and has also increased his wealth by 37% over last year. In July 2020, he stepped down and his daughter Roshni Nadar took charge as HCL chairperson. Gautam Adani and family increased their wealth by 48% over last year and moved two places up to become the fourth richest in the country.

The super rich increasing their wealth even during the Covid 19 pandemic, is not a phenomenon confined to India alone. It is reported that the richest people including Jeff Bezos of Amazon, Elon Musk of Tesla and Warren Buffett of Berkshire Hathaway increased their wealth by \$845 billion during the first six months of the pandemic. Based on data from Forbes' annual billionaires' report, the Institute for Policy Studies and Americans for Tax Fairness have calculated that the total net worth of 643 richest Americans increased from \$2.95 trillion to \$3.8 trillion between 18th March and 15th September 2020.

According to this BJP government and its Prime Minister Modi, it is the big corporates, not the workers or other toiling people, who are 'wealth creators'. The government has been lavishing concessions worth lakhs of crores of public money in the name of 'incentives' for the corporates to 'invest'. Instead of generating demand by increasing the purchasing power of the people, the government is further transferring money into the hands of the corporates.

Even when millions of workers lost their only sources of income and are starving along with their children and family members, due to the Covid 19 lockdown, the BJP government refuses to transfer Rs 7500 per month to their accounts, as demanded by the trade unions. It refuses to distribute 10 kg free food grains per month to all the needy. But it announces corporate tax relief, cheap loans and other incentives to the big corporates, arguing that these concessions would generate jobs and benefit people, particularly the youth. However, this has proved to be a myth as no private corporate investment has been forthcoming in the absence of guaranteed markets.

Lack of resources is the common excuse extended by the governments, whether it is the present BJP government or the erstwhile Congress led governments, for denying the due rights to the workers and any relief to the people.

People are made to believe that the big corporations and super rich deserve incentives and concessions because they are hard working, talented, and courageous to take risks in investing and generate wealth. The workers and the poor are lazy, spendthrifts, lack talents; so the scant financial resources cannot be wasted on them. This approach has further widened inequalities and failed to revive the economy that was deteriorating even before the Covid 19 lockdown, and worsened since.

This misconception has been created by the ruling classes to prevent people from raising the demand to bring down income inequalities into the fore. The demand to bring down income inequalities as per the Directive Principles of the Constitution should be made one of the major demands of the working class and the people.

There is growing evidence that inheritance, monopoly, crony connections, tax evasion and increasing exploitation of workers, rather than hard work, thrift, talent etc, are the major factors that contribute to amassing wealth. It is estimated that two thirds of billionaire wealth is due to inheritance, monopoly and cronyism.

One of the major factors for concentration of wealth is transfer of wealth through inheritance. The wealth, ownership and management of most of the big companies are passed on to children and other family members. More than talent or competence, it is birth that decides transfer of ownership and management. It was estimated that in less than 20 years, 500 of the world's richest people would pass on more than \$2.4 lakh crores, to their heirs.

Several countries, including most of the advanced capitalist countries, levy tax on such inheritance. The USA has an inheritance tax of 40% while Japan collects 50% inheritance tax. But in India, we have neither wealth tax nor inheritance tax. Levying wealth and inheritance taxes on the super rich, would help mobilise financial resources for public spending on the basic rights and entitlements of the people..

As pointed out by Prof Prabhat Patnaik, in 2019, it was estimated that total private wealth in our country was around Rs 9445 lakh crores. Of this, the top 1% owned 42.5% or around Rs 400 lakh crores. Even if a nominal wealth tax of 2% is levied on this top 1%, the country can get around Rs 8 lakh crore. Similarly, it is estimated that Rs 6.67 lakh crore can be collected by levying an inheritance tax of one third on the top 1%. Thus, levying wealth and inheritance taxes on just the top 1%, the super rich, the country can get Rs 14.67 lakh crore.

In addition, around Rs 5 lakh crore, in income and corporate taxes have been unrealised in 2019-20. What is even more appalling is that around Rs 2 lakh crores of indirect taxes

collected from the consumers in the form of GST etc, but have not been deposited to the government, is lying with the companies.

Spending the additional Rs 14.67 crores collected through wealth and inheritance tax, the around Rs 7 lakh crore collected through effective measures to prevent tax evasion, along with whatever the government is spending now, can ensure basic needs of the people and their rights like the right to food, the right to employment, the right to free public health, the right to free public education up to university level and the right to a living old age pension and adequate disability benefits.

Just wealth tax and inheritance tax, levied only on the top 1% of the population, and taking effective steps to prevent tax evasion by the big corporations will be enough to meet the basic and fundamental rights of the people. Thus, it is clear that it is not the lack of resources but the lack of political will to ensure that prevents the government from discharging its minimum responsibility towards the welfare of the people.

Governments committed to neoliberalism, dictated by international finance and designed to safeguard corporate interests cannot be expected to formulate policies for the welfare of the people, even when so directed by the Constitution. Trade unions, particularly the class oriented trade unions have to expose the link between the attacks on basic rights of the workers and the people, on the democratic and Constitutional rights of the people and neoliberalism.

***The general strike of the workers on 26th November, the countrywide protest on 26-27 November by the peasants, and the support and solidarity expressed by these two major productive forces of the country to each others' struggles, should be the beginning of massive united struggles to defeat neoliberalism and replace it with pro people policy regime.***



# Decisions on Working Women

An online meeting of the working committee of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) was held on 16 October 2020, preceding the CITU Working Committee meeting (online) held on 18-19 October 2020. The meeting was attended by – women working committee members and state CCWW convenors from AP, Delhi, Haryana, HP, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, UP and West Bengal. Tapan Sen, General Secretary CITU in his address explained the current political situation and the tasks of working women. The draft report, circulated beforehand was placed by the Convenor, A R Sindhu.

The report reviewed the pre and post Covid activities including the historic Jail Bharo on the occasion of International Women's Day 2020. The 12th Convention of Working

Women scheduled in April 2020 had to be postponed due to the pandemic and lock down. The meeting noted that the momentum created by the 6th March Jail bharo could not be maintained due to the pandemic and lock down. Although during the lockdown period, the participation of women workers in the relief operations and struggles both independent as well as joint, was commendable, there were nominal activities of the AICCWW or CCWWs on specific issues of working women. On the issue of domestic workers central calls were given. At the initiative of AICCWW (CITU) a call was given highlighting the demands of frontline workers, especially the scheme workers 'phool nahi suraksha do' (Not flowers, we want safety) on 14 May 2020. A joint all India Strike of Scheme workers was held on 7-8 August 2020. The meeting decided to take up the following :

## Future Tasks

- *All India General Strike on 26 November 2020- Wide campaign focusing on the issues of working women and the impact of the policies/ law changes on working women. Link up the issue of atrocities against women, dalits etc with the policies during the campaign*
- *Meeting of the CCWWs and sub committees to be completed by 30 October 2020.*
- *Maximum publicity and reach to the online meeting on 7th November/ Conclusion of Golden Jubilee celebrations of CITU and Centenary of Formation of First National Trade Union Centre*
- *Survey/study to be conducted on the issues of women workers and impact of pandemic to formulate specific demands at the state level.*
- *Next AICCWW meeting after the General Strike, in the first week of December, to discuss the 12th Convention.*



## **Haryana ASHA Workers Continue Struggle for Basic Amenities**

Twenty thousand ASHA workers from Haryana, under the banner of ASHA Workers' Union, Haryana have been on continuous struggles including strike for basic demands of safety gear and promised remuneration since August, 2020. As part of the series of indefinite strikes, they held a huge demonstration in front of the Haryana Assembly on September 26, 2020. After the Chief Minister's office assured the union of an appointment with the CM (who then was in quarantine), the strike was suspended.

When the CM failed to give an appointment, the union was forced to hold another massive rally on October 8, 2020, at Karnal. Around six thousand ASHA workers participated in the rally. Ultimately, the CM gave an appointment for October 18, but the apprehension of the ASHA workers turned out to be correct as the appointment was cancelled at the last minute, citing code of conduct in the state as the reason. Meanwhile, the code of conduct was still in place when the meeting date was being fixed, and the ASHA workers who had assembled to know the outcome were lathicharged.

In this situation, the union called for a state-level rally in Gohana where assembly by-elections were being held. On 22 October, a rally was organized in Gohana covering the districts of Sonapat, Rohtak, Jind, and

Panipat, in which around three thousand ASHA workers participated. The Gohana rally of ASHA workers was addressed by Comrade Sindhu, National Secretary of CITU. A demonstration was held in Gohana city and the effigy of the Chief Minister was burnt. A call for the siege of all MLA residences on November 6 (after the elections) was given from Gohana. Due to the calling of a Haryana Legislative Assembly session on November 5-6 and the absence of many MLAs from their residences, the dates of the demonstration were changed for the convenience of each district. From November 6 to 12, the residences of all the ministers and MLAs of Haryana Assembly were cordoned off and vigorous demonstrations were held.

Even now, the government has not yet decided to talk to the delegation of ASHA workers or taken any initiative to resolve their issues. In this context, the State Committee of ASHA Workers Union, Haryana has decided to continue the movement till their just demands are met. On November 26, twenty thousand ASHA workers from Haryana will take part in the All India General Strike called by the Central Trade Unions. The future course of action will be announced on November 26.

**Report by Surekha, President, CITU Haryana & General Secretary, Asha Workers' Union**

# **Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Stage Protest in Srinagar**

There were around fifty anganwadi workers and helpers, with red banners of Jammu and Kashmir Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union (CITU). On 4th November 2020, they were shouting slogans demanding the pending wages and other facilities. When scores of protests of anganwadi workers and helpers happened all over India within a month, this protest became special since it was held at Press Enclave, Srinagar.

It is more than a year since the people of Kashmir are under siege. For months together, the entire state was under lock up, without even telephone, unable to even know about their dear and near who are not at home. Now, in the last seven months, with the additional problem of the pandemic and the lock down, no jobs, no income, people of Kashmir are in distress. The frontline workers, the anganwadi workers and helpers, ASHA workers, MDM workers all are on continuous duty during the lockdown. They have to distribute the supplementary nutrition to the beneficiaries' door steps, take surveys and educate people on Covid 19 etc. But the payment of their wages are pending for the last three to four months. In addition, the Lt Governor has ordered that their wages will be paid through the Sarpanches. This has led to rampant corruption as well. In areas like pathan in Baramulla, wages of anganwadi workers and helpers are pending for the last many months since the sarpanch refused to sign.

The Union affiliated to CITU and AIFAWH has been inactive for the last couple of years due to various reasons. With the special initiative of CITU Kashmir regional committee, project level meetings were organized in different districts and a plan of action was taken up. Memoranda were submitted on the demands. As a culmination, the union tried to hold the demonstration at Srinagar. In spite of the administration, the armed forces

and the police keeping vigil at every place, defying the might of the Central Government which denied all democratic rights to the people of Kashmir, the anganwadi workers and helpers held the demonstration and spoke to the media as well.

## **State Convention of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union**

On 4 November 2020, the union held a state level convention. More than 120 anganwadi workers and helpers from nine districts – Anantanag, Bandipora, Baramulla, Budgam, Ganderbal, Kulagam, Pulwama, Shopian and Srinagar attended the convention. The convention was inaugurated by A R Sindhu, General Secretary AIFAWH. She told that the entire working class of the country is with their fellow workers of Kashmir in their just struggle for their rights as workers as well as democratic rights. She called upon the working class of Kashmir, especially the anganwadi workers and helpers to join in large numbers in the All India General Strike on 26 November 2020.

The convention was addressed by Md. Yusuf Tarigami, President and Abdul Rasheed Nazar, Secretary J&K state CITU. Convention was presided over by Lateefa Gani, Vice President and Convened by Haneefa.

The convention dissolved the state committee elected in 2017 and elected an organising committee with Lateefa Ganai (Anantanag) as Convenor, Suraiah (Baraamulla), Mishra (Kulgam) and Haneefa (co convenors) and Hajra (Budam), Mudessir (Srinagar), Mubeena (Shopian), Daisy (Pulwama), Haleema (Bandipora) as members. The convention decided to enroll membership 2020 and hold project and district conferences by next two months. The state conference will be held in February 2020.





## ***Punjab Anganwadi Struggle against pre-school policy***

In a cabinet decision, the Government of Punjab has decided to open nursery schools in all government schools and ordered all children of 3-6 years will go to these nursery schools. The government created nearly 9000 posts for appointing the nursery teachers. While appearing to be beneficial to the children, this move is against the scientific concept of Early childhood care and education imparted through the anganwadis (courtyard garden) under the women and child development department. This decision taken without any study or preparation for infrastructure or resources, will ultimately lead to the closing of nearly 26000 anganwadi centres. In 2017 also the government has come with such a proposal and had to withdraw because of the resistance by the Anganwadi Mulazim union Punjab (CITU) and at that time had an agreement with the union that no children from anganwadi will go to school.

This sudden decision in the shield of lockdown and also at a time when the government is not appointing regular teachers in the vacancies is intended to

give legitimacy to the mushrooming private nursery, kindergarten schools. Anganwadi Mulazim Union, Punjab decided to launch militant agitation against the government. On 2nd October, the foundation day of ICDS anganwadi workers and helpers from 9 districts gathered the Minister for WCD in her home district. She left home silently to avoid talking to the union. On 12 October 2020, workers and helpers from 11 districts assembled at Sangrur, the home district of the state Education minister. The massive gathering of nearly 8000 people marched to his home. The minister, through the district administration, has agreed for a meeting with the concerned officials, minister with the union on 15 October 2020. In case any concrete assurance is not given by the ministry, the union will further intensify the struggle.

***The March in Sangrur was attended by Usharani, President, A R Sindhu, General Secretary AIFAWH, Raghunath Singh, General Secretary, Punjab CITU along with the state leaders of the union, Harjeet kaur, Shubhash Rani and Amrit Kaur and others.***

# Electricity Employees Magnificent United Struggle & Victory

*Written by Prem Nath Rai, General Secretary, CITU UP State Committee*

## **The 'Work Boycott'**

15 lakh electricity employees in Uttar Pradesh including permanent and contract workers, junior engineers, sub-divisional officers, executive engineers and superintending engineers – all united under the single banner of UP Vidyut Karmachari Sanjukta Sangharsha Samity (VKSSS) of their respective 18 organisations in all the production and distribution units of the state public sector Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd (UP-PCL) - were on indefinite 'Work Boycott' since early morning of 5 October, after giving sufficient advance notice and pre-strike warning agitations.

Their single demand to Yogi Government was to stop privatisation move of UP-PCL and notification to privatise Purvanchal Vidyut Vitaran Nigam Ltd, (PVVNL), the power distribution entity of UP-PCL for the entire Eastern UP comprising of 5 of the 18 administrative divisions of the State. In response, the Yogi Government hired engineers and others from NTPC, BHEL and others to take charge of PVVNL units; district administration deployed top officials in all its installations and also outside; deployed massive police force and asked the army to stand by.

To break the unity of the employees the Government attempted to hold discussion separately with the constituents' organisations of the Sanjukta Sangharsha Samity. But, all unions / associations, including BMS affiliates, stood firm and refused to hold separate discussion and demanded meeting only with the Sanjukta Sangharsha Samity. Ultimately the Government held marathon meeting with the Sanjukta Sangharsha Samity from 2 to 5 October, but failed as the Minister-in-Charge, who was present in the meeting, directed the administration not to sign the agreed draft of agreement at the

last moment after getting telephone call from 'higher ups'. In the meantime, 'Work Boycott' became total in all generation and distribution units; hired personnel failed and general tripped. With that the Yogi Government also tripped.

Immediately, the Chief Minister formed a Ministerial Subcommittee which held discussion with the Sanyukt Sangharsha Samity at 3.30 PM on 6 October and the agreement was signed the same evening and the 'Work Boycott' was called off.

CITU has sent congratulatory messages to Sanjukta Sangharsha Samity for their magnificent success in the struggle pushing the Yogi Government back.





### **The Landmark Agreement**

The signed agreement states that (1) **"Puvanchal Vidyut Vitaran Nigam Limited ke vighatan ebam nijikaran ka prastab wapas liya jata hai"** (Dismantling and privatisation of PVVNL proposal is being withdrawn); (2) **"Iske atirikt kisi anya byabastha ka prastab bicharadhin nahi hai"** (Other than this, no other arrangement is under consideration); (3) **"U.P. me vidyut vitaran nigamon ka vartaman byabastha me hi vidyut vitaran me sudhar hetu karmacharion ebam abhiyantraon ko viswas me lekar sarthak karwahi ki jayegi"** (In U.P. by taking the employees and engineers into confidence, effective efforts will be made for improvement in power distribution within the DISCOMs present system of power distribution); (4) **"Karmacharion ebam abhiyantaon ko viaswas me liye bina Uttar Pradesh me kisi bhi sthan par koi nijikaran nahi kiya jayega"** (In U.P. no privatisation will be made without taking the employees and engineers into confidence); and that no disciplinary action would be taken against the striking employees and all related cases withdrawn.

It is a landmark agreement in the background of pending Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020; Union Finance Minister's thrust of electricity privatisation in her five tranches of post-Covid relief package and funding to States; and the ongoing united and militant countrywide agitation of the electricity employees against electricity privatisation.

### **The Genesis**

Modi government and its Power Minister R. K. Singh have been publicly vocal for all out privatisation in the name of 'electricity reforms'. When the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020 was brought in public domain, the notification gave time for response till 5 May. On 1 June the electricity employees resorted to countrywide agitation against it. The Govt. extended the date of response till end July. The organisations of the employees, others and at least 15 State Governments raised objection to several provisions in the Bill. Pending these, the Union Govt. advised the State Govts. that within the present Act, electricity distribution could be privatised. Privatisation of PVVNL was initiated by the Yogi Govt. under this

advice. During countrywide solidarity action with coal workers, the Sanjukt Sangharsh Samity staged a demonstration at the UP-PCL headquarter, Shakti Bhavan, in Lucknow on 28 August and submitted a memorandum to the Chairman of UP-PCL. During discussion, the Chairman informed the Samity that PVVNL's AT&C loss reached to 41%; that PVVNL would be dismantled and three separate units would be established at Gorakhpur, Varanasi and Mirzapur and those would be contracted out to private companies.

### **The Warning Agitations**

Immediately, the Sanjukt Sangharsh Samity served notice on 24 August; held meetings in all units of PVVNL during 1-18 September; and held meetings before all electricity establishments throughout the State. On 28 September, to commemorate Shahid Bhagat Singh's birthday, a torchlight procession was brought out in Lucknow, after a meeting, which was prevented by the police resorting to lathi charge and arrest of the leaders and several employees. There were immediate statewide courting arrest by the electricity employees and the Government was forced to release all from detention across the State by late evening. This was followed by 3 hours of 'Work Boycott' since 29 September and Indefinite 'Work Boycott' on and from 5 October. The rest is history.

### **The Earlier Agreement on Privatisation**

6 October agreement is the second agreement between the Yogi Govt. and the Sanjukt Sangharsh Samity against electricity privatisation. Earlier in 2017, notification was issued by Yogi govt. for privatisation of electricity in 5 major cities, including Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Lucknow, Moradabad and Meerut; and 7 districts of Ballia, Itawa, Mau, Rai Bareilly, Jalaun, Kanauj and Saharanpur in the name of 'Power Corporation Integrated Service Provider'. Against this notification the Sanjukt Sangharsh Samity led statewide agitation and on 5 April, 2018 agreement was signed between the Govt. and the Sanjukt Sangharsh Samity by which the notification was withdrawn. In that agreement the same points in the same language was recorded, as in point (3) and point (4) as above, in the present agreement of 2020.

# ***Labour Codes-End of Bourgeois Democracy***

*Written by A. R. Sindhu*

In a bourgeois democracy, the rights of the workers – freedom of association and collective bargaining – are as important as the right to vote. In a system where an employer has the right to make profit by utilizing the worker's labour power, democracy gives workers the right to an eight-hour working day, minimum wage, and social security. In India, the freedom of association is ensured not only to the workers but all sections of the society by our constitution.

The systemic crisis of capitalism is forcing various governments across the world to forcefully implement anti-people neoliberal policies. This is creating a situation where even minimum democratic rights cannot coexist with neoliberalism. Governments in many countries are shifting more and more towards a right-wing, authoritarian, and fascist nature, removing all 'masks' of 'democracy'. In the USA, even after defeat, Trump is not ready to hand over the presidency to Biden.

In India too, the authoritarian and fascist nature of the government is being exposed day by day. The way in which laws directly affecting the two basic producing classes of the society – agriculture and labour – were passed is a stunning example of this character. Three farm laws and three (one was passed earlier) labour codes were passed in the Indian Parliament, bypassing all democratic norms and practices and not even allowing the MPs to vote. This shows that in the coming days, this government will not even shy away from changing parliamentary procedures to suit their interests.

## ***Dismantling the Federal Structure – Centralization of Power***

The BJP-led NDA government has made drastic pro-corporate, anti-peasant changes in all aspects of agriculture, which is a state subject. The paradigm shift in land use, agricultural production, and trade has taken away the right of the state governments to protect their peasantry. It has also eroded the right of the peasantry to collectively bargain with the state government. This is a part of the larger project to centralize governance in economic, political, and social spheres.

The bourgeois has proved that it will not hesitate to dismantle any democratic space which is hindering its interest. By taking away the legal rights of the working people to collectively bargain against exploitation, the government has broken the backbone of democracy and federalism.

## ***Labor Codes – Full Freedom for Class exploitation***

The RSS-led BJP government has made fundamental changes to increase working hours, decrease minimum wages, and make it impossible to form trade unions and go on strikes. They have ensured class exploitation by changing the 44 labour laws in our constitution into four labour codes – the Wage Code, the Industrial Relations (IR) Code, the Code on Social Security, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code.

## ***Working Hours***

Through the Wage Code and the OSH Code, governments have been given a free hand to increase working hours and overtime limitlessly through an executive order. This violates all international norms and human rights.

# ***“In a system where there are no rights for the basic classes, democracy is an illusion.”***

## ***Minimum wages***

In the codes, bonus, overtime, leave wage, etc. are removed from the definition of ‘wage’. This will cause a drastic reduction in benefits to the workers and make claims such as maternity benefits difficult. The government has diluted norms on per capita, per day calorie intake, number of members/units per family, etc. as prescribed in the 15th Indian Labour Conference. There is no clause in the law to ensure that the overtime allowance must be double the wages.

## ***Impossible to Unionize***

As per the IR code, it is going to be impossible for workers to form a union. Legal protection of union leaders from termination has been removed. Unlimited power has been given to the registrar to deny the registration of unions and cancel registrations at any time.

Notice period for strikes has been extended to all institutions as opposed to only for public utility services. The period has been increased from 14 days to 60 days. Once the strike notice is served, it will be considered the starting point of conciliation. Once the conciliation is on, striking will be illegal. As a result, legal strike is impossible now. There are provisions for imprisonment and penalty for participating in an illegal strike. In every way, this is criminalization of the working classes for asserting their constitutional rights.

In addition, under the clause for recognition of trade unions, there is no provision for secret ballots, thus giving a free hand to the management to maneuver and manipulate.

## ***Laws Exist, But Are Applicable to None***

The government has very cunningly used tactics to exclude maximum workers from the legal framework. The definitions of a ‘worker’ in various codes have been used so as to create confusion and avoid fitting into

many categories. For example, in some codes, the word ‘worker’ and ‘employee’ is used interchangeably to cause confusion.

In the Wage Code, newspaper employees and sales promotion employees are not included in the definition of a ‘worker’. Only a ‘worker’ has the right to form a union. However, the IR code includes both these categories as workers. So, a sales representative has the right to litigation for his pending wages, but as per the Wage Code has no right to get the pending wages! Furthermore, in the IR code, the semi-skilled worker is not a ‘worker’ but the skilled worker is a ‘worker’!

Through these measures, the government has made provisions for the employers and management to deny the legal rights of workers and make them go on unending litigation processes. All four codes exclude the scheme workers - anganwadi, ASHA, mid-day meal workers, etc. from the category of workers. Domestic workers are not workers as per the definition of workplace.

Now, workers belonging to these categories will not even have the right to form unions. Those who earn more than Rs. 18,000 in wages and do work of supervisory nature are also excluded from the definition of workers.

## ***Unlimited Freedom to Retrench and Lay Off***

The government has legalized fixed term employment, as a result, giving free reign to the employers to hire and fire. Now, only institutions having more than 300 workers will need to take permission to lockout or retrench its workers. This provision did not exist in the draft of 2019. Under this order, 70 percent workplaces and 74 percent workers will be out of the purview of protection from illegal lockouts. In an establishment where less than 300 workers work, the industrial standing orders are also not necessary.

### **Protection for Violators**

Employers have been given full protection from failing to implement even the limited rights of workers by legally abandoning labour inspections and making the labour inspector a 'facilitator'. The Code on Social Security has taken away statutory benefits from EPF and ESI schemes and handed over fund management to the central government. For the unorganized sector workers, apart from the existing contributory government schemes, nothing else is assured in the code. All the tripartite management boards have been changed to nominated bodies by the codes.

Even the provision for wages during enforcement of the Disaster Management Act or the Natural Calamities Act has been removed. Provisions from the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, although included in the OSH code after pressure from trade unions, have removed two crucial clauses – that of compulsory registration of workers by the state of origin and the host state, as well as the compulsory filing of details of migrant labourers by all establishments to the government.

### **Fundamental Changes in Constitutional Provisions**

Modi and BJP are claiming that after 70 years of independence, workers and farmers have gained real 'freedom'. The truth is that as an agent of the corporate monopoly, capital and landlord classes, Modi government has taken away at one go the rights of the farmers pertaining to land, farm produce and price, as well as the rights of the workers to minimum wages, eight hour working days, and freedom of association and collective bargaining. This is the ruling class effort to put the burden of capitalist crisis and the loss after lockdown on the basic classes. They have proved that any democratic right or institution which stands in its way will be eliminated. After all, it is the necessity of capitalism to sustain the rightwing authoritarian force in power at any cost.

We cannot see these changes in labour laws as only affecting the organized sector workers

or workers in general. All over the world, and also in India, it was the struggles against inhuman exploitation and for the basic rights of workers and peasantry that went on to become anti-colonial political struggles and created the existing democratic systems on the basis of universal voting rights. Prolonged militant struggles were the reason for various farm and labour laws - general as well as sectoral - coming into existence. There is a history of militant struggles behind every piece of labour legislation, including the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2013. Our constitution ensures the right to form associations and to struggle/strike to workers, peasants, agricultural workers, women, youth, students, and every other section of the society. This is the basis of Indian democracy.

It was only after three decades of consistent efforts that the ruling classes could make fundamental changes in labour laws in favour of the bourgeois, that too under the cover of a pandemic and lockdown. Today, there is a wave of struggles by the working classes and peasantry against these efforts to take away their hard-earned rights.

A united front has emerged between trade unions and farmers organizations and is getting massive public support. It is this public outrage that forced some bourgeois parties to come out in support of the struggles. It has forced even a BJP ally to leave NDA. The political pressure forced Congress (I), which voted in favour of the Wage Code, to support the trade unions.

***In a system where there are no rights for the basic classes, democracy is an illusion. The struggle to protect democratic systems and institutions cannot advance without linking it to the struggle for labour rights of the basic classes. The need of the hour is to unite trade unions and the farmers organizations under this cause. Only mass struggles on the basis of this unity of the working classes and peasantry can make pro-people change in the politics of our country.***



# 2 October 2020 National Convention of Workers

## **Central Trade Unions and Independent Federations declare Nationwide General Strike on 26 November 2020**

Central Trade Unions and Independent Federations declared Nationwide General Strike on 26 November 2020 against the anti worker, anti farmer, anti people anti national policies of BJP Government in an online National Convention of Workers held on Gandhi Jayanti Day, 2nd October 2020.

The National Convention strongly condemned the onslaught on the basic democratic and constitutional rights of the workers, farmers and common people of our country by the Modi led BJP government at the Centre as well as by BJP State Governments. The convention expressed support and solidarity with the struggles of different sections of the society and workers from both organised and unorganised sectors. The convention noted the militant resistance struggles of the workers against the privatisation, Corporatisation, FDI etc in various sectors including the Railways, Coal, BPCL, BSNL, Finance Sector. The Convention adopted resolutions in support of the struggles of Electricity employees in Uttar Pradesh, Proposed struggles of Coal and defence sectors. Workers all over the Country will hold militant demonstrations in support of the strike of the defence sector in all the workplaces on 12th October, 2020 and after every week thereafter, till the strike is settled honourably.

This convention extended full solidarity to the farmers who are demanding withdrawal of anti farmer agri-laws which have been passed without even allowing voting on them and declared that the joint trade union movement would continue to support and express solidarity in all forms to their struggle at the national level as well as in any part of the country. The convention condemned the divisive machinations being played out, by the

BJP governments to tear up the secular fabric of our society by implicating all those express dissent. The convention expressed serious concern over the increasing violence against women and condemned the Hathras rape and demanded justice to the victim.

The convention was addressed by G Sanjeeva Reddy (INTUC), Amarjeet Kaur (AITUC), Harbhajan Singh Sidhu (HMS), Tapan Sen (CITU), Shankar Dasgupta (AIUTUC), G Devarajan (TUCC), Soinia George (SEWA), Santosh Roy (AICCTU), M Shanmugam M P (LPF) and Shatrujeet (UTUC). The group convention which was telecasted live on facebook has reached more than one lakh workers through various links. In many workplaces workers joined the convention in groups.

### **The following programmes were adopted by the convention:**

- **Joint state/ district/ industry/sectoral level conventions (physically wherever possible, online otherwise) will be organised in October 2020**
- **Extensive campaign on the adverse impact of the labour codes on the workers down to the grassroots level up to mid November**
- **One day country wide general strike on 26th November, 2020. Let it be known that this One Day Strike is in preparation for more intense, more tenacious and longer struggles that lie ahead.**

**The Convention called upon all the working people, whether unionised or not, affiliated or independent, whether from organised sector or unorganised sector, to intensify the united struggle against the anti-people, anti-worker, anti-farmer and anti-national policies of the Govt and make the call for countrywide general strike on 26th November, 2020 a total success.**



# **CITU Working Committee Decisions**

**CITU Working Committee meeting was held online on 19-20 October 2020. The first meeting after the 16th All India Conference of CITU, the meeting reviewed the new situation and challenges and took the following tasks:**

- 1. Urgent initiative to be undertaken at all levels to develop a coordination committee of CITU unions at the lower/local/village level to carry on the campaign, agitations and struggles on local issues relating the same with the policy issues and the politics behind them. This will help to develop the broadest unity of the class and toiling people. This Coordination committee should diligently work in developing active coordination with the Kisan Sabha and Agricultural Workers' Union at the lower/local/village level to strengthen the movement. Similar coordination has to be built up in industrial areas among our unions and friendly unions to broaden and strengthen the unity of the toiling class in united struggles and campaigns.**
- 2. All out effort must be undertaken to organize the countrywide general strike on 26th November 2020 called by the united platform of trade unions to make the same more effective, visible and militant and all in united action by the working class. And the preparatory campaign for the strike must ensure the more effective implementation of the call for reaching the unreached; formation of active coordination committees at lower level, as mentioned in serial no 1, if seriously attempted, will help discharging this task more effectively. Moreover the preparatory campaign for the strike should be aimed at creating ground for further heightened action following the general strike as unanimously conceived by the joint platform of trade unions.**
- 3. Anti-privatisation struggle has to be broadened further to involve the common people from all walks of lives. In certain critical and strategically important sectors in particular viz., Railways, Electricity and Health Care, a broader forum along with the consumers and affected people from all sections has to be developed by the trade union movement for effective combat and resistance. CITU state committees have to take active initiative in this direction.**
- 4. The On-line meeting on Conclusion of the Golden Jubilee celebration of CITU and centenary of formation of first National Trade Union Centre on 7th November 2020 targeting participation of at least 10 per cent of our membership has to be made successful. Further details on link and technical arrangements will be sent shortly.**
- 5. Membership target decided by the 16th Conference have to be achieved; all dues of 2019 membership must reach CITU Centre by end October. Simultaneous initiative for cadre development activities must be strengthened.**
- 6. The Call for fund for WFTU must be responded to effectively at the earliest**

# **Adityanath's Caste Code On Full Display In Hathras**

*Written by Brinda Karat, Politburo member of the CPI(M)*

She was denied the most basic dignity even in death. Her broken body was cremated in the darkness of the night by the UP police. Correction. The UP police - uniformed guardians of rapists. Her grieving family was barricaded in their home in their village, denied the right to give their daughter the funeral she deserved. She was killed not just by her killers and their uniformed guardians, but by the fact that she lived in the centre of the unique "Made in India" social crossing, where the exploitations and oppressions of caste, class and patriarchy intersect. Valmiki. Dalit. Poor. Woman. 19 years old. Hathras district in Uttar Pradesh.

In the face of national outrage and condemnation, news is fed to the media that the Prime Minister has "spoken to the UP Chief Minister to take strict action against the officials concerned." The hypocrisy makes one sick to the stomach. The young woman was in a Delhi hospital for several days. The news of the caste-driven atrocities against her and the criminal connivance of the UP police was widely reported. There was deafening silence from the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the BJP leadership. Not a single government functionary visited her or her family in the hospital.

On September 14, the young woman, along with her brother and mother had gone to the fields to cut fodder where they separated. Her brother went back home earlier to tend to the cattle. Her mother, having completed her work, called out to her daughter and getting no response, started looking for her. About a hundred metres away, she found her daughter in a pool of blood, grievously injured, unable to speak or walk. The criminals had dragged the girl with her dupatta, almost broke her

neck, injured her spine, bit her tongue, tried to strangle her and committed horrific atrocities on her. The girl uttered a name, identified in the first instance, one of the men who had raped her. Sandeep. The son of a Thakur landlord. She knew him as several other young women in the village did - by a reputation of being a drunkard, a bully and a frequent sexual harasser of women who got away with it every time.

The filing of the FIR was delayed reportedly by five days, the urgent medical treatment the teen required was not provided. Yet, mustering all her courage despite the pain she suffered, she gave a clear statement to the police; that she had been gang raped. She named the men involved. She described what had been done to her. Yet, shockingly and shamefully, the UP police have been brazenly trying to shield the culprits by underplaying the barbarity of the crime. "No, they did not try to strangle her", they say, "her spine was injured because they dragged her". "No, they did not bite her tongue," they say, "she did it to herself when they tried to strangle her.." But wait, didn't you just say they did not try and strangle her? How do you assume they did not slash her tongue? Who told you? The rapists?

The IG of Aligarh, a senior police officer, told the media that "initial reports did not suggest rape." Which reports is he referring to? There was no proper medical examination until days after the rape. If it is "initial", where is the second report? Is he saying there was no rape and the girl was lying? These police officials are culpable of protecting the accused. They too are criminals. Should not action be taken against them? When the PM asks for strict action against officials, does he include actions against these connivers?

Are the top brass of the BJP unaware of the unwritten code of the Adityanath Government - that caste brotherhood with the Chief Minister grants you special immunity from the law, especially in rape cases? FIRs are not filed, victims find themselves doubly victimized, their families threatened, witnesses get killed mysteriously in accidents, the list is endless. The Unnao rape victim suffered repeatedly at the hands of this unwritten code. This was the case involving Senger, a BJP leader and then MLA, who raped a 17-year-old in 2017, implicated her father in a false case, got him beaten up so severely that he later died due to his injuries and threatened and bullied the victim to withdraw the case. For a full year, it was the Yogi Government and its caste code which protected him. It was only after the intervention of the Allahabad High Court that he was arrested. The case was referred to the CBI. He was convicted and given a life sentence. A month ago, the CBI informed the UP police that it had found four officers, one from the IAS and three from the police, to be guilty of "dereliction of duty" in the case and recommended they be punished. Three of these officers are of the protected caste species. No action has been taken. On the contrary, they continue to occupy important positions.

Another case is of the so-called "Swami" Chinmayand, also a former BJP leader and protected by the caste code of the Chief Minister. He has been accused of exploiting a young female student. Again, he was given full protection by the government. A biased SIT (Special Investigation Team) refused to levy the more stringent rape laws against him. On the contrary, the girl is being harassed, terrorized and punished for reporting abuse against him. There are many such examples. The State Women's Commission's head has not said a word. The Women and Child Welfare Minister is silent. Is it just a coincidence that both of them are also part of the protected caste species?

The recent NCRB report shows the highest increase of over seven percent in crimes against Dalits in UP and an equally high

increase in crimes against women. Put these together and it becomes clear why UP is not just emerging as the most lawless state, but also a state in which all socially marginalized sections are being treated not by the values and principles of the Constitution of India, but by the code set out by the Manusmriti.

Sections of citizens who are protesting and demanding justice for the girl express a sense of disquiet that the issue of caste is being brought in. This is a crime against a woman, they say, whoever the criminal is, punish him, why bring in caste? They should know and learn about the caste code in operation in UP. They should also know that in Hathras, caste-based mobilizations in defence of the criminals are taking place. They are powerful enough to sabotage processes of justice.

It is true that all women by virtue of being women are vulnerable to violence, domestic and sexual. But it would be quite wrong to see women as a homogeneous social group. There are critical class-based and, in the Indian context, caste-based issues which differentiate women's social experiences. In the case of the victim from Hathras, she belonged to a family of agricultural workers subordinate to the economic power of landlords creating deep insecurities in the working conditions. Women of the working rural poor and, more specifically, Dalit women have to face the might of patriarchal, economic and social order. In the Indian context, the slogan of sisterhood or women's unity is meaningless and would be reduced to a sham if it did not include a unity to fight caste and class-based oppression and exploitation. Ignoring Dalit women's specific experiences in the name of women's unity is to actually impose a privileged class and caste-based bias on struggles for justice.

Today in Delhi, women and student organisations and activists protested outside UP Bhavan. In Lucknow and others parts of UP also, there were protests. It is only these people's voices and mobilizations that can initiate a push back, a resistance to policies which perpetuate such atrocities and patronize its perpetrators.



## ***CITU, AIKS, AIAWU and AIDWA delegation in Hathras, UP***

A delegation of Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWU) and All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) visited Gulgarhi village in Hathras, UP on 4 October 2020 and extended solidarity with the family of the Dalit girl who was brutally gang raped and killed by upper caste landlord men. It is with great difficulty the delegation was allowed by the police to go the house of the victim. The village is still cordoned and their neighbors are terrorized. The delegation had to wait for three hours to meet the family.

Members of the delegation conveyed their condolences to her parents Ramadevi, Omprakash and other members of the family. The inconsolable family members shocked by the barbaric incident held the BJP Government responsible for their daughter's death. The mother of the girl narrated how, the police in an inhuman way have cremated her child without allowing her to even have a look. She also said that her daughter has named the culprits before her death. The police intimidation in each step also was questioned. The father in law of the brother of the girl was manhandled by the officials. The girl's father Omprakash told the team that they do not have faith in the BJP State Government or in the CBI Enquiry announced by them.

The family wanted a Judicial Enquiry supervised by the Supreme Court. The team supported the demand and assured all support for the same including legal support as may be required. Omprakash who worked in Asansol, Bengal earlier said he was acquainted with the Red Flag, our organisations and requested support in their struggle for justice.

This lower caste (mahadalit) agricultural labour family has no land except their house. They do not have any income but the agricultural jobs in the fields belonging to the upper caste land lords for which one get Rs 200 as daily wage. The family is under continuous threat by the upper caste landlords in the village. One neighbor said that the family of the victim is being threatened of dire consequences.

The delegation which visited Hathras was comprised of of Vijoo Krishnan, Joint Secretary, AIKS, A.R.Sindhu, Secretary, CITU, B.Venkat, General Secretary, Vikram Singh, Joint Secretary, AIAWU, Punyavathi, Treasurer, Asha Sharma, Joint Secretary, AIDWA. They were joined by the leaders from UP, Brijlal Bharti, Joint Secretary and UP State Secretary AIAWU, Bharat Singh UP Kisan Sabha President, Idris, Secretary, Aligarh District CPI(M) and AIDWA leader, UP AIDWA leaders.



## ***CITU, AIKS, AIAWU Call for Countrywide Protest against atrocities on Dalits, Women and socially backward sections on 13 Oct' 20***

CITU, AIKS, AIAWU note the grave situation of increasing brutalities against dalits and other oppressed sections of the society especially against dalit women under the BJP rule. In Uttar Pradesh it is a total Criminal Raj under the RSS led Yogi Government which is making UP as a laboratory of Upper caste landlord dominance terrorizing the dalits as well as any dissenting voice, the best example being the Unnao case.

The increase in atrocities like mob lynching and gang rapes is integrally linked to the Government project of marginalization of dalits and oppressed sections under the crisis-ridden neoliberal order. The reverse land reforms and privatisation and continuing all round loss of jobs and livelihoods especially under the BJP ruled states in the recent period and the increased assertion and struggles of the oppressed sections for their rights has

made the ruling classes, with the help of caste hindutva forces consolidate the landlord rural rich nexus which serves the corporates. Under neoliberal hindutva regime, the exploitation of the working people and the oppression of any assertion will manifest as a caste/gender oppression in our country especially in the countryside. It is of utmost importance that we take up every such issue of caste/gender oppression as an integral part of our joint struggle against the neoliberal policies and the capitalist landlord classes.

We have noted that our units have spontaneously organized protests against Hathras rape and murder case in most of the states in numerous locations. The joint of CITU AIKS and AIAWU held on 5 October 2020 decided to organize joint protest of CITU, AIKS and AIAWU throughout the country on 13 October 2020.

### ***Our Demands***

- ***Time bound effective enquiry of Hathras case under supervision of Supreme Court***
- ***Strict punishment to the police officers and other officials who had derelict their duty***
- ***Ensure safety to the family of the girl***
- ***Justice to the victims of all such cases including Unnao, Balrampur and other places***
- ***Ensure implementation of Justice Verma Committee recommendations***
- ***Land and housing to the landless***
- ***Ensure jobs and minimum wages to all***
- ***Strict implementation of laws on reservation, on atrocities against dalits and violence against women***



# **MARCH TOWARDS COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE ON 26-27 NOVEMBER 2020,**

## **ALL SUPPORT TO FARMERS' AGITATION ON 26-27 NOVEMBER 2020.**

The meeting of the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions (CTUs) and Sectoral Independent Federations and Associations held online on 16th November 2020 expressed satisfaction over the tremendous response being received from the workers and the people at large throughout the country to the ongoing campaign for the countrywide General Strike on 26th November 2020. The preparatory campaign for the general strike against the anti-people, anti-worker, anti-national and destructive policies of the BJP govt led by Modi has been going on with great zeal all over the country. Conventions, posters, leaflets jointly as well as independently by the central trade unions and their affiliated trade unions are being held at state, district and local levels as well as at the sectoral level. The strike notices have been served. In addition to workers, people from all walks of life and all sections of society, viz., students, youth, women, peasants have been coming forward extending their enthusiastic support to the call for General Strike on 26th November.

The meeting welcomed the whole-hearted support extended by the united platform of the peasants' organisations, the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), to the General Strike by the workers. It is heartening that the peasants who are already

in the midst of struggle against the draconian farm laws passed by the Modi Govt, support the workers fighting against the anti worker measures of this government.

The Joint Platform of CTUs and Sectoral Federations and Associations which has been extending active solidarity and support to the struggles of the peasantry and agricultural workers from the very beginning, has reiterated its active support to the countrywide protest actions and March to Delhi on 26-27 November 2020 announced by AIKSCC. The charter of demands of the General Strike by CTUs and federations/associations includes the demand to scrap the draconian Farm Laws. Along with the demands directly related to the workers, the trade unions have also been campaigning on this demand.

As the meeting of the Joint Platform of CTUs and Federations and Associations noted in clear terms, the country is going to witness the convergence of militant countrywide actions by the workers and the peasants on 26th and 27th November 2020 including the massive general strike and chakka jam on 26th November against the anti-people, anti-worker, anti-farmer and anti-national destructive policies of the Govt at the centre. This will be the beginning of a new phase of heightened struggle of the people in the direction of defiance and non-cooperation.

**INTUC   AITUC   HMS   CITU   AIUTUC  
TUCC   SEWA   AICCTU   LPF   UTUC**

***And Sectoral Independent Federations & Associations***



## Over 50% Women Lawmakers

*Bolivia ranks third in the world, after Rwanda and Cuba, in terms of women's representation in Parliament.*

Recent Elections in Bolivia have not only brought back the socialist parties to power but also increased women lawmakers in both the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate. Evo Morales' party Movement for Socialism (MAS) claimed victory in a Bolivian presidential election. This is a huge win for Bolivian democratic forces and its indigenous population, who faced heavy suppression after the right-wing interim government staged a US-backed coup last year.

According to Telesur, the MAS achieved a majority in the Senate with 21 seats, of which 10 are occupied by women. The Citizens' Community won 11 seats, seven of them by women, while "We Believe" won four, two of them by women.

As for the Chamber of Representatives, 48.33 percent of the plurinominales are men, while 51.6 percent are women. Meanwhile, women's leadership returns in the uninominales with 57.14 percent of the seats occupied by them. The indigenous representation will be led by women with 57.14 percent seats. Also, 55.56

of the supra-state representatives are women. A significant number of elected women parliamentarians are new faces, which shows the confidence of the electorate in their female representatives.

### *How did this happen?*

Women representation in Bolivian politics is not a new phenomenon. 2014 elections were historic as it led to a 51% representation of women in the Legislative Assembly.

The approval of the Political Constitution of Bolivia (2009), concurrent laws along with an extensive and sustained mobilization of different women's movements, gave way to achieve the recognition and application of the principles of parity and alternation to strengthen more equitable participation between women and men. The election of 82 women out of 166 assembly members is the highest in Bolivian history. After 32 years of democracy, in 1982 the country went from having 2 percent of representatives in the legislature, to reach parity in the political sphere of the national legislature.



### **Women Representation in Politics**

According to the Map of Women in Politics 2020 of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and United Nations Women, Bolivia ranks third in the world, after Rwanda and Cuba, in terms of women's representation in Parliament. Rwanda boasts by far the best record for female representation in parliament, with nearly two-thirds of its seats currently held by women.

There are only two other countries with more women in parliament than men – Cuba (53.2%) and Bolivia (53.1%). Latin American and Caribbean nations also take the next four spots in the top 10 – Mexico (48.2%), Grenada (46.7%), Nicaragua (45.7%) and Costa Rica (45.6%).

The rest of the top 10 is rounded out by two more African nations – Namibia (46.2%) and South Africa (42.7%) – and, perhaps unsurprisingly, Sweden (46.1%), the world's first self-proclaimed "feminist" government.

The Nordic group of countries lead the way in female representation with 42.3% of seats, followed by the Americas (30.3%), the rest of Europe (26.5%), then sub-Saharan Africa (23.8%). Asia (19.7%) and the Arab states (18.7%) lag well below the global average, but it is the Pacific nations (15.5%) which have the worst record.

### **Female Representation Matters**

Quotas are a common factor in many of the electoral systems which have more women as legislators and MPs. In 1991, Argentina

became the first country in the world to introduce a gender quota by law. Since then the legal requirement for parties to put forward a certain proportion of female candidates has become common across Latin America, and beyond. Many other countries have adopted different approaches with the same aim, either reserving seats for women (as in China, Pakistan and many Arab nations), or by political parties voluntarily adopting their own quotas (as in much of Europe).

Quotas have certainly had a dramatic impact on Rwandan politics. In the 1990s on average 18% of parliamentary seats were held by women. The constitution of 2003 mandated 30% of elected posts be held by women. By 2008 women made up more than half of Rwanda's parliament, and that proportion rose to nearly two-thirds in the 2013 election.

Over the last 20 years, huge steps have been made towards greater female representation. In 1997, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands were the only countries where women held more than 30% of the seats. Now there are 49 countries where that barrier has been broken. But since 2015 progress has stalled – and in some cases gone into reverse.

Representation of individuals from diverse sectors like farmers, women, community leaders, academics ensures the development of a more equitable society. Women's representation matters help in making rules to prevent women's oppression and gender-based violence. (Article Courtesy: Gauri Lankesh News Desk; 30 October 2020)





## ***Protest in Indonesia against New Labour Law***

*"Police fired tear gas at the protesters from several high schools and universities as they tried to approach the palace compound, turning roads into a smoke-filled battleground. The protesters hurled rocks and bottles." "Similar clashes occurred in large cities all over the country, including Yogyakarta, Medan, Makassar, Manado and Bandung."*

Those were the screaming headlines and reporting in the corporate media in India on 10 October about the protest against the omnibus law including labour in Indonesia.

No doubt there were violent protests; no doubt the students were protesting against the new law in Indonesia; no doubt the students there have legitimate reasons for being concerned about their future; but such reporting in the print media in India is a deliberate attempt to divert attention from the real issue; to hide the organised trade union movement in Indonesia against the new law; and suppress the democratic voice of protest - all in service of capital.

The press also reported that Indonesia's Security Minister Mohammad Mahfud, flanked by the Military Chief and other top leaders, told a televised news conference late on 8 October that protesters were insensitive to the conditions suffered by people who are struggling against Covid-19 and financial difficulties. National Covid-19 task force spokesperson Wiku Adisasmito said, "We remind you that we are still in a pandemic condition, there is a public health emergency." Anti-people law can be passed in a pandemic; but the 'emergency rule' only applies when people protest against that law.

The so-called omnibus 'Job Creation Law' was hurriedly approved by the Indonesian Parliament on 5 October, 7 out of 9 political parties supporting it, just before the countrywide workers general strike on 6-8 October.

The new omnibus law is over 1,000 pages long, amends 79 existing laws, relaxing all protocol for business; enforcing slavery conditions

on the workers and over-rides environmental protocol for domestic and foreign corporates. It abolishes sectoral minimum wage; reduces severance pay from maximum 32 months to 19 months; increases overtime to 4 hours a day and 18 hours a week; reduces two weekly off days to one day; reduces restriction on outsourcing including hiring workers from outside the country.

The law has been made to invite transnational corporations in anticipation of their exit from China soon. Indonesian's Chambers of Commerce & Industry has welcomed it.



At the call of the trade unions joint forum, thousands of the workers resorted to countrywide 3-day strike from 6 to 8 October and thousands staged demonstrations in cities and industrial centres. The Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions (KSPI) said that over 2 million workers representing 32 labour unions and federations took part in the strike and rallies for several days beginning 6 October.

The police in Jakarta blocked the streets leading to the Parliament preventing the workers from holding a mass rally there; and detained at least 200 high school students who attempted to reach the compound. Across the country several workers and students were arrested. A coalition of 15 activists groups including trade unions and students led the movement.



# **Breaking Barriers**

## **A First Person Account**

I am Dr. Rajendra Bharud. I was born in Samode Village in Sakri Taluka. I am a Bhil tribal. My father passed away before I was born and there was “no man of the house”, so to speak. We were steeped in poverty. There was no money even to take photographs, so till date I don’t know how my father looked. With no land or property, we used to live in a hut made of sugarcane leaves.

But Maay (mom) was made of sterner stuff and never sat brooding over our condition. She had two sons to take care of and so she started working towards that. She started making liquor from flowers and selling it. Men used to come to our hut and consume the liquor. She later told me that, as an infant, sometimes when I cried she used to give me a couple of drops of the same liquor so that I would sleep because she had to run the business and she didn’t want to disturb the customers. As I grew up, I started running errands to get peanuts and other small snacks for the customers.

Maay was a determined woman and she ensured that my brother and I went to school. I used to go to the zilla parishad school and though I had no pens or books (due to lack of funds) I enjoyed studying. We were the first kids from our tribe/village to go to school and nobody gave any importance to education.

Once, during exams I was studying and a customer asked me to get him some peanuts and I bluntly refused. He laughed at me saying ‘as if you are going to become a doctor

or engineer’. I was hurt. But Maay retorted telling him that I will. Maay’s confidence gave me a certain will and determination to continue studying and I decided to give it all I can.

Later on I was admitted to another school which was CBSE board, in Akkalkuva taluka, 150 kms away from our village and I had to move there for further studies. Maay had come to drop me and both of us cried a lot as she bid me adieu when going back home.

Being on my own was difficult but I realised that I should not waste this opportunity. That gave me more determination to make the most of it by studying harder and that resulted in me getting 97% in my 12th exams. I got admission in Mumbai’s G S Medical college on merit and received several scholarships. That took care of my education and hostel fees and Maay used to send me some money for my sundry expenses. She continued her liquor business as that was the only source of income for us.

As studies continued, I also decided to appear for UPSC exams and so in the final year of MBBS, I was studying for 2 exams alongside my internship. As far as Maay was concerned, she knew I was studying to become a doctor. She had no idea about my other plans. What is UPSC, or why one gives that exam and how will it help? Questions like these were all beyond her small world. I wanted to be a collector and she didn’t even know about the local officials like tehsildar.

***And most importantly, by seeing me rise from a small village to this position of a Collector has created an awareness among my people of what they can do and achieve. That by itself is a huge reward.***

Finally as the year ended, I had my MBBS degree in one hand and the results of having cracked the UPSC in the other hand. And as I came back to my small village, quite a few important people had arrived to welcome me home. Political leaders, the district collector, local officials, all came to congratulate me.

Maay was nonplussed and didn't understand what had happened. I told her that I had become a doctor. She was really happy. I also told her that I would not be practicing medicine as I had also become a Collector now. She didn't know what that was but realised that it was something big. In fact none of the villagers knew what it meant. Though all of them were happy that 'our Raju' had become big and some even congratulated me for becoming a conductor!

I am now posted in Nandurbar district as a District Collector and Maay now lives with me. There's a lot to do here as this is a fairly backward district with a lot of adivasi population. And I look forward to building all the necessary infrastructure for their development.

A lot of times I am asked how I reached here in spite of all the hurdles in my path. Right from childhood it was a struggle. Eating

twice a day was a big deal. Our toys were mango seeds or sticks. Swimming in the river and climbing the hills was how we spent our childhood. That made me physically and mentally strong. Who was with me? My strength - my Maay. And the locals, who were all equally poor. They too went hungry like us, they too played the same games. So the concept of being poor never really touched me.

Till I came to Mumbai for studies. The difference was stark. But I never envied the well off or cursed my luck. All I realised was that if my situation or condition had to change, I will have to do it myself. And I studied and exercised and studied. Yes, I missed a lot of experiences that normal children or teenagers have in life, but I prefer to look at what I have now.

A Bhil tribal boy, Rajendra Bharud, an IAS officer at the age of 31, first from my tribe, my village and my area. Today I have everything that I could have dreamed of.

And most importantly, by seeing me rise from a small village to this position of a Collector has created an awareness among my people of what they can do and achieve. That by itself is a huge reward.

# **All India General Strike**

## **26-27 November 2020 Demands**

- 10kg per person per month food grains to all needy; Urgent measures for containing price-rise through universalisation of public distribution system and banning speculative trade in commodity market
- Cash transfer of Rs.7500 per month for all Non Income Tax paying families
- Expand MGNREGA to provide 200 days' work in a year in rural areas at enhanced wages; extension of employment guarantee to urban areas. Containing unemployment through concrete measures for employment generation.
- Withdraw all anti farmer laws
- Withdraw the anti worker labour codes
- Universal social security cover for all workers  
Minimum wages of not less than Rs 21,000/- per month with provisions of indexation to all workers including scheme workers
- Assured enhanced pension not less than Rs.10,000/- p.m. for the entire working population. Scrap NPS and restore earlier Pension, improve EPS-95
- Stoppage of disinvestment in Central/State PSUs including the financial sector and stop corporatisation of Govt run manufacturing and service entities like Railways, Ordinance Factories, Ports etc.
- Stoppage of contractorisation in permanent perennial work and payment of same wage and benefits for contract workers as regular workers for same and similar work. No fixed term employment in any sector
- Removal of all ceilings on payment and eligibility of bonus, provident fund; increase the quantum of gratuity.
- Withdraw the draconian circular on forced premature retirement of Government & PSU Employees. Withdraw the DA Freeze
- Compulsory registration of trade unions within a period of 45 days from the date of submitting application; and immediate ratification of ILO Conventions C 87 and C 98
- Withdraw the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020
- Withdraw the NEP 2020. Allocate 5% GDP for Public Education
- Public Healthcare for all. Allocate 6% GDP on Public Health

*(These demands include demands of 12 point charter of demands of CTUs as well as the current demands. In addition demands of various sectors are also included. )*



***Photos of Protest Against Hathras Caste-based Sexual Violence***



**Andaman & Nicobar**



**Centre**



**Jammu & Kashmir**



**Maharashtra**



**Punjab**



**Telangana**



**Uttar Pradesh**