



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

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Formation Rally, Kolkata- 1970



1970 - 2020



Mazdoor Kisan Sangarsh Rally - 2018

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## **Foundation Conference of CITU**

The All India Trade Union Conference was held from 28th to 30th May, as per the decision of a Convention of General Council members and State Committee members of AITUC, held at Goa on 9th and 10th April 1970. It was held at Lenin Nagar (Ranji Stadium) in Kolkata. A reception committee with Com. Jyoti Basu as Chairman and Com. Manoranjan Roy as General Secretary organized the conference. Reception Committee had enrolled 50,000 workers as members of the committee. The review made later noted that the enthusiasm among workers for this conference was such that, when a call was made for collection of Rs.2 lakhs, 3 lakhs was collected within a short period of 3 weeks! The Conference was attended by 4264 delegates representing 1759 unions with a membership of 8,04,637 from 18 states. Fraternal unions sent 116 delegates and 1134 observers attended the conference, making a total of 5514 participants.

The Conference was guided by a presidium consisting of Mohammed Ismail, Suhrid Mullick Chaudhury, Haridas Malakar, E. Balanandan, Bimalanada Mukherji, A Balasubramaniam and S.Y. Kolhatkar. P. Ramamurti presented the report, which was earlier circulated in English, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil and Malayalam. There were brief translation of all speeches in all languages for the delegates.

The resolution on formation of a new All India Trade Union Centre, to be named Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was moved in the Conference on 30th May, by Com.Manoranjan Roy (West Bengal) and seconded by E. Balanandan (Kerala); which was passed unanimously among thunderous applause and shouting of slogans.

The Conference elected B.T. Ranadive as President, P. Ramamurti as General Secretary and Kamal Sarkar as Treasurer. Mohammed Ismail, S.Y. Kolhatkar, E. Balanandan, Suhrid Mallick Chaudhari and Sudhin Kumar were elected Vice-Presidents and M.K. Pandhe, Manoranjan Roy and Niren Ghosh as Secretaries. The Conference elected 158 General Council members and 33 working committee members were elected by the General Council. The Working Committee included Coms. Jyoti Basu and Samar Mukherji. On 31st May, a massive rally of 10 lakhs of workers was held in the Brigade Parade Ground.

### **50<sup>th</sup> Year of CITU : 100<sup>th</sup> Year of First Trade Union Centre**

#### **100 Years of Struggles and Sacrifices : 50 Years of Fight for Class Unity**

- 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 marks the commencement of the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the foundation of CITU;
- 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2019 marks the commencement of 100<sup>th</sup> year of the formation of the first all India trade union centre.
- CITU decided to observe Golden Jubilee Celebration of CITU and Centenary Celebration of the first all India trade union centre through year-long 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 2 PM on 30 May.

## Rededicating Ourselves

CITU has given a call for yearlong celebrations of the Centenary of first Trade Union Centre (TUC) in India and Golden Jubilee of CITU beginning in 2019.

Working class in India took birth with the extraction of India's natural resources, establishment of transportation by rail and sea and of communication, packaging industries like jute and small engineering by the British capital for their own class interest and almost coinciding with the tribal revolt and people's uprising in the First War of Independence.

It has grown with national freedom movement and aligning with it. Strikes, struggles and sacrifices on class issues and national liberation movement are the glorious history of working class movement in British India. Since independence it carried on class battles on class and people's issues against profit hungry exploiters and people's oppressors.

It also carried ideological battles within trade union movement on class perspective and against reformism. It carried struggles for class unity, as supreme task, against the rulers' policies of division and attempt to isolate the leading core carrying trade union movement on class line. They have repeatedly failed.

Yet, we must equip ourselves taking lessons from history and remaining vigilant against any attempt of class collaboration and reformist diversion from any corner. Class struggles and class unity cannot be structurally institutionalised. These remain dormant and require struggles to bring these in the consciousness and for action. It has to be part of our day to day practice.

On this May Day 2019, we re-dedicate ourselves to this great cause.

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## Comrade Ramanika Gupta



CITU is deeply grieved on the passing away of the veteran trade union leader Comrade Ramanika Gupta on 26 March, 2019 after prolong illness at the age of 88. During her entire lifetime, she stood and resolutely fought for the economic and social justice of the workers and socially oppressed sections, particularly the Adivasis and Dalits. In her death, the workers and down-trodden sections of the people lost a tall leader and strong voice for their rights and upliftment.

Her biggest contribution was the liberation of coal workers, particularly the loading and unloading workers, from the stranglehold of coal mafias in the Hazaribagh coalfield facing personal attacks by the hired criminals; and forming Coalfield Labour Union and spreading the same in 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, its national working committee member and of All India Coal Workers Federation. She was a member of CPI(M)'s Jharkhand state committee; 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 separate trust and worked vigorously in it.

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 Bamapada Mukherjee

CITU is deeply grieved on the demise of comrade Bamapada Mukherjee, the legendary leader and an architect of the working class and Left movement in Asansol-Durgapur industrial belt since early fifties; on 13 April 2019 at the age of 98. His passing away is a great loss to the united working class struggle.

Starting his life as a steel worker himself, Comrade Bamapada Mukherjee pioneered in building militant organisations and the movement of the emerging modern working class in coal, steel, aluminum and other industries in the this industrial belt braving brutal atrocities of the employers – state administrations with sacrifices and martyrdom of several comrades. He contributed immensely in building all India federations of coal and steel workers. He had been the driving spirit of the successful united struggle against privatization of IISCO despite several hurdles.

CITU pays respectful homage to the departed leader and conveys heartfelt condolences to his comrades and family members.



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## Centre of Indian Trade Unions

# 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; and
- **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 annex Palestine territories; ● **Demands** recognition of independent sovereign state of Palestine with 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital;
- **Reiterates** firmly that fight against imperialism is an integral part of the class struggle to defeat the exploitative capitalist system and usher in 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 .....<sup>th</sup> 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, Toyoda, 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; 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; ● 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; 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 the 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.

## **On 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; and

**- Strengthen the presence of the Left, the real friend of the toiling people, inside the Parliament.**

- During its 5 years 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 Jobless and Jobloss 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; and
- 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; ● **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;
- **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 on 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;
- **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 2019-2020 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 focused 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**



## **50 years of Fight for Unity of the Working Class**

K. Hemalata

*- Class Unity - Class Struggle - Class Struggle to End Exploitation; and - For Social Transformation*

**IT** was with this vision that Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was founded in 1970. The year-long Golden Jubilee celebrations of CITU will start on its Foundation Day this year, on 30 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 the times. 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’. B T 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 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 freedom 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.
- 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 19 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 the 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 countrywide general strikes were held under the leadership of the joint trade union movement, the latest 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, 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 19 January 1982. The 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' held on 5 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 tradewise 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 the cadres up to the grassroot 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 those. 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 !**

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## Centre of Indian Trade Unions

# '100 years of struggles and sacrifices' Of the Working Class of India

J. S. Majumdar

**BEGINNING** on 30 May 2019, CITU is going for yearlong celebration of "100 years of struggles and sacrifices" of the working class of India, since the formation of the First Trade Union Centre, and "50 years of fight for unity of the working class" since the formation of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions.

**FOLLOWING** are historical milestones of these working class struggles and sacrifices, till the formation of CITU, for the class and people's cause, class unity, and developing class perspective and orientation. From the lessons of these struggles emerged CITU's clarion call of "Unity & Struggle". How, as the legacy of these working class struggles and sacrifices, CITU carried these forward and created historical milestones are being dealt separately.

I

**EMERGENCE** of the First Trade Union Centre in India has its own background of the working class struggles and sacrifices. Class struggle is inherent in the very nature of capitalist mode of production remaining dormant among the working class, sometimes spontaneously bursting out in the given situation. The trade union organises, builds movement and leads them in objective direction.

- There were several strikes and agitations in the last quarter of nineteenth and more than one and half of the first decades of twentieth century. Those were led by workers agitationist groups, welfare centres and mass of workers as trade unions led by individuals and philanthropists. These unions had no regular membership, constitution, organizational set up etc like those of the modern trade unions.
- But, this period was also marked by the political consciousness of the Indian working class developed along with the freedom struggle. In July 1908, when Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was convicted and sentenced to six years' imprisonment on charges of 'sedition', "*Bombay was shut down in protest, ... workers of all textile mills and railway workshops went on strike, army was called out, ... 16 workers lay dead in the streets with nearly 50 others seriously injured,*" wrote historian Bipan Chandra in *India's Struggle for Independence*.

On this, BTR writes (*The Marxist*, October-December 1985), "*The workers were being drawn into the national protest against British tyranny. This happened in 1908 when Lokmanya Tilak was sentenced to six years' imprisonment. The workers went on a one-day strike for every year of the sentence. They clashed with the police and the British army. Several were killed. Their resistance galvanised the entire city of Bombay and drew into action small businessmen and the middle classes. This was the first time that the working class used the powerful weapon strike in all industries for a political purpose and revealed its efficacy as the general mobiliser of the people.*"

On this, Lenin wrote, "*The infamous sentence pronounced by the British jackals on the Indian democrat Tilak... this revenge against a democrat by the lackeys of the money-bag evoked street demonstrations and a strike in Bombay. In India, too, the proletariat has already developed*"

*to conscious political mass struggle – and, that being the case, the Russian-style British regime in India is doomed!” [“Inflammable Material in World Politics”; July 23 (August 5), 1908]*

## II

**CHAIN** of events after the World War I led to rapid formation of organised trade unions and the first trade union centre. These were -

- World War I resulted in grave economic miseries of the Indian working class by way of price rise, low wages, long hours of work and other exploitative measures which led to serious industrial unrest and agitation.
- Great October Revolution 1917 and formation of first Working Class State in human history galvanised the working class movement and national liberation movement worldwide including India.
- Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Rowlett Act, imprisonment of national leaders and heightened freedom struggle by Home Rule Leagues in 1915, Rowlatt Satyagraha in 1919, Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements in 1920-22 also led to resurgence of working class activity in that period.
- Great October Revolution and worldwide working class resurgent movement consequently established the tripartite international labour forum of the League of Nations (now an UN agency) – the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919.
- First modern trade union was formed as *Madras Labour Union* in 1918 in Buckingham and Karnatic Mills, led by B. P. Wadia, an associate of Annie Besant; with 1600 members in its roll, and organizational set up and leadership team.
- Gandhiji formed Ahmadabad Textile Labour Association also in 1918 with Gandhian economic thought of ‘Trusteeship’ between capital and labour for ‘class peace’ and ‘class collaboration’.
- Rapidly, trade unions developed in industrial centres mostly in Bengal, Madras and Bombay provinces and in shipping, railways, communications, jute, coal, textiles and engineering industries. The workers were restive and strike struggles were sweeping the country.
- In absence of a national body of the unions, the British ruled Government of India nominated N.M. Joshi to represent Indian trade unions in ILO. Many unions protested. Ultimately, it was decided to resolve the dispute by forming an all India body of the trade unions.

**THUS**, the first all India trade union centre was formed as the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in a conference in Bombay on 31 October, 1920 attended by 101 delegates representing 64 unions with 1.40 lakh members. 43 more unions expressed solidarity. A number of political leaders, including Lala Lajpat Rai, who presided, Tilak, Annie Besant, C. F. Andrews and others participated. External delegates from British Trade Union Congress also attended. The meeting elected Lala Lajpat Rai as its President and N. M. Joshi as its General Secretary. Entire leadership, obviously, came from the Indian National Congress. The nascent working class party of India – the Communist Party of India – was just formed at Tashkent on 17 October, 1920.

## III

**YET**, there were two currents in this newly formed trade union centre (TUC). The two currents were best reflected by the textile workers – one in Bombay led by the Girni Kamgar Union going for militant strikes and class struggles going beyond immediate economic demands and for basic policy changes; and the other led by Ahmadabad Textile Labour Association going for class collaboration (reformism) limited to some instant economic issues. These two currents continued to plague AITUC.

- The trade union movement and national freedom struggle juxtaposed heightening both in the

period after formation of the TUC. Strike struggles were sweeping across the country. In 1921 alone, about 400 strikes took place. More than half of those were successful. Freedom movement raised demand from 'dominion status' to 'Purna Swaraj', first raised by the Communist party and the trade unions led by them.

- For the first time in India's history, to celebrate May Day, the International Working Class Solidarity Day, red flag was raised by Malayapuram Singaravelu Chettiar on 1 May 1923 in Chennai.
- To split the unity of the working class; to isolate the revolutionaries of freedom movement, who were working in the trade unions and leading workers strikes; and also to control the sweeping strike actions; the British Government in India introduced Trade Union Act, 1926 by which the identity of the leading functionaries and obtaining written permission, as certificate, from the British rulers became compulsory for any trade union activities including in conducting the strike.
- 1928 Simon Commission arrived for 'constitutional amendments' instead of 'Purna Swaraj'. Call of '*Simon Commission Go Back*' reverberated across the country; workers resorted to strikes and staged black flag demonstrations particularly in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Lahore; while protesting at Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai, the first President of AITUC, was killed by police lathi charge who died on 17 November, 1928; and Saunders, the British police officer who had led the lathi charge, was killed in retaliation by the revolutionaries on 17 December, 1928.
- To put a stop to the waves of workers strikes (316 lakhs man-days lost due to strikes in 1928) and their involvement in the national freedom struggle, the imperial government introduced 'Trade Disputes Bill' and 'Public Safety Bill' 1928 together having repressive provisions. While the Trade Disputes Act being debated in the Central Assembly on 8 April, 1929, "*There was an explosion in the Assembly and suddenly the Hall was filled with smoke and slogans rose in loud voice by two young men from the Visitors' Gallery. The three slogans raised many times over were -'Inquilab Zindabad', 'Down With Imperialism' and 'Workers of the World Unite'.*" (JNU Prof. Chaman Lal in the *Mainstream Weekly*, 2009). They were Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutta. Rest is history.  
'Inquilab Zindabad', since then, became the war cry of the working class in India to go forward in the blazing path of class struggle.
- Again, to divide the trade unions organizational unity, isolate the communists from it and to suppress the militant trade union movement joining the national freedom struggle; the imperialist government instituted 'Cawnpore Communist Conspiracy Case', 1924 in which Muzaffar Ahmad, S. A. Dange and others were sent prison.

Yet, the communist influence became stronger in trade union movement. The British Government struck again in 1929 arresting 31 trade union leaders including two workers of Girni Kamgar Union and British nationals, who stood in international solidarity with Indian working class movement. For minimum publicity, the Government held long four and half years' trial in remote place at Meerut, which is known as Meerut Trial, against allegation of attempt to overthrow British imperial government by inciting the working class.

Despite British government's attempt of minimum publicity, this trial brought countrywide huge protest and international condemnation from the international celebrities such as Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland, H. G. Wells, the Archbishop of York, Harold Laski. And, then the failed government launched an all out offensive declaring Indian Communist Party illegal on 23 July 1934. This made more than a dozen registered trade unions also illegal as per Trade Union Act, 1926.

- Thousands of Royal Indian Navy ratings went on strike on 18 February, 1946 in Bombay; lowered Union Jack and hoisted Congress and Muslim League flags; came out on the street. Workers joined in spontaneous strike and joined them. They were also joined by ordinary people raising slogans against British government and saluted by 'Jai Hind'. They were quickly joined by naval

revolt in other parts – in Calcutta, Madras, Karachi and Vizag. Earlier, there were protests in Royal Indian Air Force also. Both signaled the end of British Raj soon in India.

Though massively supported by the workers and the people, both the parties – Congress and Muslim League – refused to support them and asked the naval ratings to return to their duties. History was unmade.

#### IV

**HISTORY** of Indian trade union movement is replete with splits and unity efforts. Communists in the trade union movement always stood for the trade union unity as pre-requisite condition for working class unity, the historical force of social change; remaining firmly committed to class struggle as the working class weapon for this social change. They never compromised with reformism in the trade union movement. Hence, the “Unity and Struggle” became the essence of the trade union movement.

#### **FIRST** divisions and unity: (1930-1940)

- Soon after British government launched Meerut Trial against communists as trade union leaders; the reformists led the first split in AITUC in its Nagpur session in 1929 and formed Indian Trade Unions Federation (ITUF) in 1930.
- The specific condition created, after Meerut Trial began, in the trade union movement and the attitude of the reformists, was best explained by Abdul Halim, the main organiser of communist movement in Bengal after arrest of Muzaffar Ahmad in Meerut case, in his book ‘*Task of the Left-Wing Trade Unions of India*’, published in 1929. In such condition, Red Trade Union Congress (RTUC) was formed separating from AITUC in 1931.
- Amalgamation of ITUF and AIRF (All India Railwaymen’s Federation) gave rise to National Trade Union Federation (NTUF).
- RTUC merged with AITUC in 1934.
- NTUF became affiliated to AITUC in 1938 and then merged in its conference at Nagpur in 1940.

#### **SECOND** divisions (1947-1970)

- Just 3 months before the Independence, Congress party engineered split in AITUC at the behest of Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel and formed Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in 1947 “to extend their influence over the working class and fight the communists as the main enemy...wanted a policy of class-collaboration..” “In his presidential address, Sardar Patel said, ‘The irresponsibility and recklessness of these people pass all understanding. Strikes are launched on all conceivable pretexts in utter disregard of the workers’ own interests and well being. Nothing is achieved through these strikes except chaos and misery all round’.” (Quote from BTR’s writing).
- This was followed by the formation of Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) in 1948;
- United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) was formed in 1949, which itself was split in 1958; and
- The separated group as UTUC (LS) was formed in 1958 (later renamed as AIUTUC);
- Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), affiliated to RSS, was formed in 1955.

#### **FORMATION** of CITU

- In this background Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was formed in 1970 with call of “Unity and Struggle”. The historic milestones of its journey since then are being depicted separately.

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# Expert Committee on National Minimum Wage

## A Fraud on the Working People

Tapan Sen

After the introduction of the Code on Wages Bill in Parliament in 2017, the Govt of India, through its Labour Ministry, appointed an Expert Committee on 17 January 2018 stated to be for determining the methodology for fixing National Minimum Wage for the country. The Expert Committee is constituted with the officials of Wage Cell of the Labour Ministry with Dr Anoop Satpathy, the fellow of V V Giri National Labour Institute as Chairman—all central govt appointees under the administrative control of Labour Ministry and also a representative of ILO's India office. Curiously enough, and also quite consistent with the undemocratic and anti-labour character of the Govt, no representative from the organizations of the workers has been included in the Committee. The Expert Committee has submitted its report on 8 January 2019 and the report has been placed in public domain after about a month.

**The recommendation on National Minimum Wage by the Expert Committee and the entire exercise made by the Committee to arrive at said recommendation is a total betrayal of the just and genuine aspiration of the workers in general who actually create the GDP for the country as a whole.**

The expert Committee recommended, in the name of national minimum wage, amounts ranging Rs.8,892 - Rs.11,622 per month (for different regions of the country) meant for unskilled worker which is way below the level of minimum wage recommended by 7<sup>th</sup> Pay Commission as on 2016 based on ILC recommendation. The demands scientifically formulated by the entire trade union movement in the country and also by successive Indian Labour Conferences (ILC) have been ignored with arrogance. In fact, the formula or mode of calculation discovered by the Expert Committee and for that matter of fact the minimum wage determined by the committee is far below the demand of Rs.18,000 besides being, arbitrary, devoid of any scientific basis and grossly violative of the unanimously agreed formula set out by the successive Indian Labour Conferences, and hence is liable to be out-rightly rejected.

In fact the entire exercise of the Expert Committee including its terms of reference is tutored by the Govt at the behest of its corporate masters to keep the minimum wages as low as possible and adopt such perverse methodology as to arrive at a pre-decided conclusion.

The conspiracy and deceptive manipulation started from deciding the terms of reference itself. The Committee, as its Report says at the very beginning, is set up to devise methodology for determining the National Minimum Wage as provided in the Code on Wages Bill. Everybody knows that Indian Labour Conference, the highest tripartite body in the country comprising representation from state and central govts, employers organizations and also the trade unions have already laid down in clear terms and with all details the methodology of determination of minimum wage through its unanimous recommendation. Subsequently Supreme Court in its judgment of 1992 added certain more items of requirements to be taken into account over and above what had been decided by the ILC. Then where is the scope for determination of the methodology de novo? Still the terms of reference of the Committee included the issue of determining methodology to create avenue for the Committee to manipulate and play fraud while calculating the National Minimum Wage on the lines tutored by the corporate class and their agents in the Govt.

And the result has become evident. The Committee recommended a National Minimum Wage for the unskilled labour ranging Rs.8,892 – Rs.11,622 per month to be made applicable from July 2018 which is much less than Rs 18000 as decided by the 7<sup>th</sup> Pay Commission as on January 2016 following the same methodology of ILC recommendation and Supreme Court Judgment. The wage level decided



in 2018 by the Expert Committee has become more than 36% less than the wage level decided by another Govt appointed Committee in 2016. Has the price level or inflation gone down to such huge extent in two years between 2016 and 2018? Will the pundits and experts of the great Expert Committee reply?

### **ILC recommendation and Supreme Court Judgment**

The most comprehensive criteria for covering all the basic needs were evolved unanimously by the 15<sup>th</sup> Indian Labour Conference (ILC) in 1957 for fixation of minimum wages in which Govt of India was a party. The norms are that a need-based minimum wage for a single worker should cover all the needs of a workers' family consisting of spouse and two children i.e 3 adult units. The food requirement was to be 2700 kilo calories, 65 grams of protein and around 45 – 60 grams of fat as recommended by Dr. Wallace Aykroyd for an average Indian adult of moderate activity.

The 15<sup>th</sup> ILC further resolved that clothing requirement should be based on consumption of 72 yards or 66 Meters per annum for the average worker's family. For housing, the rent corresponding to the minimum area provided under the government's industrial housing schemes was to be taken. Fuel, lighting and other item of expenditure were to constitute an additional 20% of total minimum wage. The Supreme Court upheld these criteria in the case of Unichoy vs State of Kerala in 1961.

Thus the criteria fixed were,

- (1) A family consisting of 3 adult units; (2) 2700 calories food requirement; (3) 66 metres of clothing per annum; (4) House rent; and (5) Another 20% for lighting, fuel etc.

The Supreme Court went one step further in Raptakos Brett vs Workmen case of 1992 and held that besides the five components enunciated by the 15<sup>th</sup> ILC, minimum wage should include a sixth component, amounting to 25% of the total minimum wage to cover children's education, medical treatment, recreation, festivals and ceremonies. The SC also observed that a wage structure including the above six components would be **“nothing more than minimum wage at subsistence level” which the workers must get “at all times and under all circumstances”**.

Then again the 44<sup>th</sup> ILC held in 2012, adopted unanimously, inter alia, the following Recommendations of the Conference Committee on Minimum Wage:

1. There was consensus that the Government may fix minimum wages as per the norms/ criteria recommended by the 15<sup>th</sup> ILC (1957) and the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court (Reptakos Co. Vs Workers' Union) 1992. The Government may take necessary steps accordingly.
2. There was a broad consensus that the Minimum Wages Act should cover all employments and the existing restriction for its applicability on the scheduled employments only should be deleted. This will also help India ratify ILO Convention No.131.
3. It was broadly agreed that there should be national minimum wages applicable to all employments throughout the country.

The same unanimous recommendation of the 44<sup>th</sup> ILC was again unanimously reiterated by the 45<sup>th</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> ILC, the last one having been inaugurated by our present Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi.

### **What did the Expert Committee do?**

Was there any other work for the Expert Committee than to apply the formula concretely laid down by the ILC recommendation and Supreme Court judgment on the basis of current price level and arrive at the actual figure to meet the subsistence level requirement of the a workers' household? As per calculations made by the trade unions, the Minimum Wage should have been fixed **at** around Rs.26,000 as on 2016. Even then as recommended by Seventh Pay Commission, all the central trade unions have jointly formulated their demand for Minimum Wage at not less than Rs.18,000 as on 2016.

The Expert Committee also in its Report claimed that they have followed the overall framework and formula laid down by the ILC and the Supreme Court Judgment. The so called 'jumla' politics of

unalloyed falsehood promoted by the ruling class has also infected the Expert Committee appointed by them. While making the actual exercise, the Committee resorted to multidimensional perversion and manipulation in all the aspects of the exercise mandated upon them to satisfy the corporate masters.

First the Committee in a most arbitrary manner reduced the calorie-requirement level to 2400 from 2700 calories formulated by ILC while calculating the food requirement per household. Workers are supposed to consume less according to the Pundits of the Expert Committee as they have reportedly learnt from the consumption trends of workers during the period 1993—2012. Can criminality go further? How can someone with minimum level of sanity can prescribe reduction in calorie requirement of mass of the Indian workers who are chronically malnourished and underfed as revealed from the ranking of India at 100<sup>th</sup> out of 119 countries in the Global Hunger Index published annually by International Food Policy Research Institute(IFPRI)?

Secondly, they have arbitrarily and drastically reduced the prices of all basic food items and fuels as compared to prices adopted by seventh Pay Commission in 2016. Say for instance, the prices of rice and wheat products was taken as Rs.25.93 per kg in 7<sup>th</sup> CPC and the same has been reduced to Rs.20.40 per kg for the minimum wage recommendation of the so called expert committee. Similarly, for pulses the respective figures are Rs.97.84 per kg and Rs.56.50 per kg, for vegetables the figures are Rs.43.57 per kg and Rs.14.30 per kg, for fish & meat the average price taken are Rs.356 per kg and Rs.121 per kg, for milk the corresponding figures are Rs.37.74 per litre and Rs.28.30 per litre and so on and so forth. On housing, the Expert Committee estimated expenditure of only Rs 1430 per month in its report. Can any member of the Committee find even any single room occupation in any of the towns or even suburbs with that ridiculous amount in any part of the country? Thus, it is observed that there was a deliberate attempt to reduce the food requirement in one hand and the commodity prices on the other to grossly undervalue the overall household requirements.

And shamelessly enough, the Expert Committee noted in its report that all the calculation of household expenses are made by them at 2012 prices which has been updated for July 2018 by reportedly using the national average of the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers.

Is there any logic or rationale for the Committee which was born in 2018 to calculate the household expenditure on the basis of 2012 prices for the purpose of fixing minimum wages of workers to be made applicable from July 2018 after making some cosmetic changes based on the fraudulent price index? Only motivation is to undervalue the minimum household expenditure to keep the prescribed minimum wage low.

The extent of satanic exercise of undervaluation of the minimum required food expenses of the workers' household has come clear once the Expert Committee's finding is compared with the exercise made by the Seventh Pay Commission. The Seventh Pay Commission estimated the total food expenses for a household with 3 adult consumption units at Rs.8,019.80 based on 2700 calories intake as on January 2016. On the other hand the Expert Committee report cruelly slashed down said food expense requirement to Rs.3,672.90 at 2012 price level which after so called updation to July 2018 level comes out to Rs.5,582.80 i.e., a reduction by 30.4% in comparison to Pay Commission recommendation, that too after a gap of two years.

Interesting to note here is that the Expert Committee was magnanimous enough to increase the average household size to 3.6 consumption units, while calculating the food and other requirements. Even then the Expert Committee's estimation of food expenses as on 2018 has become almost one third of what had been actually estimated by Pay Commission two years back in 2016. The fraud in the entire exercise has become thoroughly exposed.

And there has been other definite motive for the Expert Committee to keep the food expense requirement abnormally low. As per ILC recommendation besides food requirement, other requirement like fuel, lighting etc is to be calculated as percentage of the food expenditures (20%) to arrive at a final figure. Further, as per SC Judgment expenditure for education, health etc has to be provided for at 25%

of the total minimum wage. Thus food expenses provides the foundation of calculation of minimum wage which as per the dictate of the appointing masters of the Expert Committee has to be kept at the rock-bottom level to keep the National Minimum Wage at lowest possible level.

### **Fraud and Deception on the People**

Moreover the concept of National Minimum Wage cannot be different for different regions. National Minimum Wage represents the bottom level wage below which no state should be allowed to fix their minimum wage. Difference in price level in different parts of the country can well be taken care of by dearness allowance to be fixed based on price indices published regularly by the Govt for all the regions. Even then, the Committee made a mockery of the tasks given to them by prescribing different National Minimum Wage for different regions. Satanity and unscrupulousness knows no bound.

To summarise, the entire exercise of the Expert Committee appointed by the Modi Govt and announced in Parliament with much fanfare is actually a fraud and deception on the working people. Their main attempt is to to keep the Minimum Wage as low at Rs 8892/- for major parts of the country. And they have engineered such criminality on the people mainly in four ways ; One by arbitrary reduction of calorie requirements from 2700 to 2400 in gross violation of ILC recommendation and SC Judgment despite the fact that Supreme Court termed the minimum wage calculated on 2700 calorie requirement as “subsistence level wage”; Two by drastically reducing the prices that too arbitrarily of all items of household requirements and adopting 2012 prices for calculation of Minimum Wages in 2018 without any justification whatsoever; Three by estimating the housing expenses at a ridiculously low and totally unworkable level and Four by adopting an altogether different methodology for calculation of the other Non-food expenditures like clothing, fuel, lighting, children’s education, medical treatment, recreation, festivals and ceremonies completely ignoring the recommendation of 15<sup>th</sup> ILC and subsequent Apex Court orders on these issues.

In totality the Expert Committee on National Minimum Wage appointed by the Modi Govt committed a serious crime on the working people betraying all professional integrity. It is a humiliation on the working people who actually create GDP for the country, resources for national exchequer and even profit for the corporate masters of the Govt in power.

It should be totally rejected along with its perpetrators in the governance

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## INTERNATIONAL

### **Indian TU Delegation met Venezuelan Ambassador; Expressed Solidarity with Venezuelan People**

On behalf of WFTU-affiliated 6 central trade unions in India - AITUC, CITU, AIUTUC, AICCTU, TUCC and UTUC; a delegation with Swadesh Dev Roye and Amitava Guha of CITU; Vijayalakshmi, V.S. Giri and S. Damle of AITUC; Rejeev Dimri of AICCTU and others called on the Ambassador of Venezuela in New Delhi on 25 March, 2019.

Ms. Coromoto Godoy, the newly appointed Ambassador of Venezuela in India, warmly welcomed the delegation and briefed about the latest situation in Venezuela. She also narrated the support to President Maduro and struggle of the people of Venezuela to protect the Bolivarian Revolution from the attack of the US-led imperialist forces.

The delegation handed over to the Venezuelan Ambassador the solidarity resolution adopted in the “Indian Workers’ Convention in Solidarity with the people of Venezuela’ against the Imperialist Aggression” which was held in New Delhi on 19 March, 2019. (*The Working Class; April, 2019*)

# INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

## Telecom

### **Modi Government's Parting Gift**

At the end of 5 years term, BJP's 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; the crony capitalism is in full display to favour Ambani's Jio.

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 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 public sector BSNL needs government's support.

But, despite BSNL making operational profit, the government is not extending any financial support to BSNL. On the contrary, the Department of Telecommunication (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, Government allowed public sectors banks to provide huge loans to private telecom companies, but not to BSNL.

BSNLEU alleges that the stringent condition imposed by DoT to cripple BSNL financially is to create 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 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 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.

Problem started with Reliance Jio starting its operation in September, 2016 indulging 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 pricings 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 the IUC (Interconnect Usage Charge) down 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 assurance given by the union communication minister to all unions in January, 2018 as a calculated move of Modi government to clip the wings of BSNL.

BSNL is having 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 of the Government to 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*)

## IT

# Indian IT sector

[Background paper, adopted in the National Convention of IT/ITES Employees]

(Chennai; 10 February, 2019)

### **Indian IT Sector**

Indian IT sector has its origin in late 1960s when Indian IIT professors started working indigenous systems for India and TCS started its company. In pre-90s India, IT sector was more focused on research, building indigenous system and punch card system. The commercialisation of the internet in the 1990s and the growing demand for Indian IT engineers in the field of customised software development as well as repair and maintenance of computing machines prompted the growth of the industry. India's position as the preferred Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and knowledge process outsourcing destination in the world had been established. Actual major development started on the eve of the millennium. When the world was celebrating the arrival of the new millennium, many Indian IT professionals were solving the Y2K problem. Indian IT sector was a major contributor in solving the issue of Y2K by which Indian IT sector earned revenue of \$2.3 billion between 1996 and 2000.

A series of software technology parks were established across several cities in India during the late 90s and early 2000s as initiatives for promoting the industry. Several state governments also started offering attractive fiscal sops and other incentives for IT firms; a few states succeeded in creating IT clusters, which were mostly concentrated in the four states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. After 2000, increase in the availability of low wage skilled graduates favoured for software development in India with English speaking ability and undersea cable connectivity favoured BPM (Business Process Management) services in India more than competitive Brazil, Philippines, and Costa Rica. Over the years India becomes the major market for IT outsourcing in this period.

### **Sops to the industry**

The Government of India and the State Governments have given a free hand to the captains of the IT & ITES industry by giving subsidies and closed their eyes on the implementation of labour laws. Subsidised electricity, concessions in the registration of land price, transportation facilities etc were provided to these companies.

The growth of the IT sector in the period between 2000 and 2008 in terms of revenue was at 25%-40%. 1.7 million jobs were generated. Indian IT companies, during this period, were better positioned to attract most of the outsourcing work. This was the situation when many MNCs recruited people in advance and paid them even when they were given no specific work (bench) within the company. This rapid growth was feasible with an abundance of graduated human resources with rising number of engineering colleges in India. Around 11208 engineering colleges were opened between 2003 and

2009. At the same time state governments came up with special IT policies to attract IT investment and companies.

The UPA I government brought it SEZ Act 2005 to promote exports by giving lots of subsidies, tax exemptions and labour law exemption. This SEZ Act was widely used by IT/ITES companies for taking huge tax exemption. Even today there are 274 IT/ITES SEZs in the country, largest by any sector.

2008 global recession changed the scenario for the Indian IT sector. Majority of the Indian companies faced reductions in outsourcing projects from the developed countries; existing projects were undergoing closure and many developed country customers reduced their IT spending. Such trend had huge impact on the employees' jobs; many employees working onsite were asked to return. Many employees lost their jobs; employees who retained their jobs were asked to work for lower pay.

During this period large number of incidents, of IT employees committing suicides due to loss of their jobs were reported across the country. Despite such distress for the employees, Indian IT companies maintained profit margins of 25%-30% during this period.

After 2008 Indian IT sector faced aftershocks of the recession. The employment generated was not like the pre-2008 period. IT employees started to face new challenges of the pink slip, retrenchment, hire & fire, contract labour, layoff etc. The entry-level salary started to stagnate at Rs 2.25 – Rs.3 lakh / annum. Employees who joined in the 2000s reached mid-level management around 2012 with high salary. They were the first target of the companies for retrenchment and were replaced by new comers with low salary. During the period 2012 – 2016, the industry saw mass retrenchments e.g. – 25,000 from TCS, 8,000 from CTS, 12,000 from Wipro, 7,000 from Infosys etc. New jobs creation for 2008 - 2013 also dropped to a single digit of 9%.

This was also the period when IT companies saw strong challenges from the employees leading to the emergence of unions in the sector.

At the time when the BJP government, led by Modi came to power in 2014, the world of IT was going through rapid changes with the emergence of social media, smart phones, cloud technology, machine learning, and artificial intelligence etc. The IT companies in India tried to face these challenges by adopting new technology and re-skilling of existing employees. This created a new wave of retrenchments with CTS, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, HCL, Capgemini, Verizon etc going for mass retrenchment. Instead of re-skilling the employees they found it as a chance for sending out employees. We must remember that no company made losses and continued to maintain double digit profit margins with 55% global market share. The present BJP government gave several popular slogans like “Digital India”, “Start up India”, “1 Trillion Digital economy 2025” and “3 million jobs by 2025”. Such loud announcement didn't have much impact on creating a domestic market for the IT industry.

Still, India's domestic IT-BPM market is growing in a slow phase to reach \$26.5 billion at 10% growth in FY 2017-18 employing over 3.96 million people. However, employment growth is slack because of lack of Indian domestic market. Domestic market growth year on year basis, on an average, is in single digit only. Lack of IT Infrastructure outside Tier 1 and 2 cities, infrastructure crunch in major metro hubs, lower internet penetration have been causing hurdles in the expansion of domestic IT industry.

As has already been noted, around 75% of Indian IT industry is dependent on outsourcing market especially to US, UK, and European Union. Protectionism tendencies across the globe first hit the visa policies of different countries. Every year around a million graduates come out of Indian engineering colleges but new jobs in the IT sector have become scarce. The intake of the engineering graduates by the IT industry touched a new low during the last two years. The old method of bench strength came to an end. In the last five years i.e. 2013-2018 it was around 5% only. Instead, IT companies have increased the utilisation rates of employees from the previous 70% to 72% to the new norm of 80% to 85%. In other words, using the same manpower they are getting more work from them. Existing

employees are under severe stress from changing technology, working methodology, lack of a proper hike, promotion etc.

The present NDA government, led by BJP, as well as the preceding UPA government, led by the Congress, exhibited their total commitment to the neoliberal policies. As per reports, merely half a million out of 4 million employee are re-skilled to digital skill. According to NCRB report, in the last 5 years, thousands of employees committed suicide due to changing job nature, job stress, job loss etc in the Indian private sector. Protecting / increasing profits at the cost of the workers / employees is integral to the capitalist system, of which, the now discredited neoliberalism is the latest phase.

### **Conditions of Employees**

Meagre wage hike and little promotion opportunities have now become the industry model. Variable components in salary are being increased instead of the basic component. Some companies have even started to remodel their performance appraisal, promotions based on digital technology skills etc. Recently, Capgemini proposed 0% hike! The situation in ITES companies is even worse with no proper pay slips; PF, gratuity or ESI etc are being implemented. Social security is left as an option for employees with negotiation on higher take home.

Forcible resignation has become common in Indian IT companies. As per recent statistics, many customers started to move towards fixed term contract system (55% of contract), which, in turn, helps corporate and IT companies to employ under fixed term employment. The BJP government's notification extending fixed term employment to all sectors is causing huge distress in IT employment. In addition, IT employees face many other problems including of canteen and toilet facilities.

### **Conditions of Women Employees**

IT sector is a big employer of women who comprise 36% of its workforce. Though women form 51% of workforce at the entry level, there is a huge drop in their presence as they move in their career. This is mainly due to work pressure, low skills and lack of opportunities. Recent amendment to the Maternity Benefit Act has enabled to retain women employees to some extent but still that period is considered non-productivity time when women employees are given the low rating, least hike and denied promotion. The gender wage gap in the IT sector stands at 38.2%. Complaints committees as per the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2013 have been put in place by the major corporates but this is not being implemented by many middle and small level companies. IT companies posted 65.7% of the sexual harassment cases FY17, 3 out of the top 5 cases reported were in TCS, Wipro and Infosys.

### **Implementation of Labour Law**

Instead of effective implementation of labour laws to address this situation, the governments have extended several exemptions from labour law implementation to the IT sector. Even Some mandatory provisions like canteen, toilets, ambulance, doctors, are not being implemented especially in ITES. Even court directives are not implemented.

### **Global Conditions**

Globally we witnessed improvement in economic growth with global GDP growth of 3.9%. This trend reflected in global IT market and IT spending of the customer. Global IT market is expected to grow at 6.2% and is being revised upward since digital spend drives growth. The major shift in IT spending is towards disruptive technology. Global digital spend is expected to increase from USD 180 bn in 2017 to USD 310 bn in 2020. Growing over 20% YoY it would be a key driver for global economic development.

After his election as President Trump announced biggest tax cuts and, to reduce unemployment rate in the USA, announced the policy of 'Jobs in America for Americans'. The IT industry in India is one of the major victims of this policy, with huge impact on employment generation. IT companies closed their ODCs (Offshore Development Centres) and started recruiting US professionals.

In the background of Brexit, UK witnessed lowest employment in the last 40 years. It has changed the visa regime which has affected onshore employment opportunities.

In Asia, Japan, due to its ageing factor, is facing severe shortage of IT professionals. Japan needs around 2,00000 IT professionals immediately and is expected to have a demand of 8,000000 professionals. China is self-dependent on its IT needs and is more focused on enhancing digital research. Philippines, Bangladesh were raising a hub for BPO centres. OECD countries were posting mixed trend with visa policy change and sluggish growth.

Overall customer-shift is towards 'Industry 4.0' and Digital in developed countries is driving the global IT market.

### **Strict Visa Regime**

Protectionism across the globe first hit the visa policy of the countries. Trump government made stringent visa policy for H-1B visa due to which there was a change in two decade onsite-offshore model of Indian IT companies. IT companies started to recruit more locals for last couple of years. Last two years there was around 43% fall in H-1B visa usage. This visa policy change badly affected Indian IT employees many corporates started to purposefully reduce Indian head count and increase American head count. Recent example would be CTS reducing 8000 head counts in India and increased same number in US.

This migration of work is not taking place by layoff or ramp down etc. It is taking place by stopping new intake and not by replacing the attrition employees. Some employees were silently sent out in many companies using forced resignation option which we are experiencing in Verizon MPS etc.

### **Unionisation and Movemental Initiatives**

CITU always acknowledged the right to organise and collective bargaining of the IT employees. It has since many years been demanding that all relevant labour laws should be applied in the IT sector without any exemptions. In various states it supported their efforts to redress their grievances through various means, legal, administrative and organisational.

After the 2008 global crisis, as the managements increased their attempts to keep up and increase their profit margins by shifting the burdens on to the employees; so also the collective efforts of the employees to redress their grievances including issues like - paid maternity leave, sexual harassment at workplace, illegal retrenchments etc - also increased as in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana etc. Trade unions of IT/ITES employees have been formed in different states including Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, West Bengal etc. The Karnataka IT/ITES Employees' Union (KITU) intervened in the issue of termination of employees in Macmillan Publishing Company and held demonstrations in front of its office; it held a bike rally in support of the two days' general strike. Union of IT/ITES Employees (Unite) in Tamil Nadu addressed the issue of dismissal of employees in Verizon, filed cases, conducted street corner meeting and signature campaign. It conducted a militant demonstration in Chennai on the issue of paid maternity leave etc. It conducted a militant demonstration in Chennai on the issue of paid maternity leave etc. Association of IT/ITES Employees (AITE) in Kerala has been actively working as a trade union. The AITE intervened legally against the retrenchment in TCS and conducted programmes. After the successful intervention of the AITE the wages of the Data Entry Operators have been increased from Rs.80 to Rs800 / day. AITE continuously mobilising the ITES employees and struggles are conducted. As a result, the LDF Government announced a welfare board for the IT & ITES employees.



In Maharashtra, Aurangabad ITES employees, employed in service centres of Airtel and Vodafone, are organised in union. CITU supported their efforts. Issues like appointment letters, bonus etc were raised. The workers got the arrears and bonus. Some issues related to victimisation are pending in labour courts. However after some months, the service centres were closed after settlement with the employees and paying them the compensation. In West Bengal, West Bengal IT Services Association (WBISTA), All India Computer Graphic & Co-Workmen Association (AICGWA), All India IT&ITES Union (AIITEU) are intervening in the issues of the IT companies. They protested against the dismissal of IT employees in Wipro.

FORIT (Forum of IT Employees) of Telangana have also organised campaigns and demonstrations on issues like retrenchments in Verizon etc. In almost all these instances CITU committees rendered all the necessary help and support to the IT employees.

CITU Centre took initiative to call meetings to discuss issues of IT/ITES employees in New Delhi and Bengaluru. The issues were discussed in the meetings at different levels. The national convention has been called as per the decision of the meeting of the activists among IT employees, held in Bengaluru, to coordinate and strengthen all these attempts to protect the rights of the employees.

### **Demands**

- Form National level and State level tripartite committees and discuss the issues with all stake holders including Nasscom and the trade unions;
- Revoke labour law exemptions provided to IT companies;
- Ensure implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013;
- Monitor implementation of labour laws in IT companies;
- Bring ITES sector out of essential service sector;
- Enable In House committee in each company;
- Bring mandatory day care facility in all companies;
- Mandate working condition as a basic right;
- Form Internal Complaint committee as per the Act;
- Fix Minimum Wages to the ITES & E-Seva employees

## **Coordination Committee Meeting Decisions**

CITU-associated National Coordination Committee of IT & ITES Employees Unions, formed in the national convention at Chennai (*The Working Class; March, 2019*), held its first meeting in Bengaluru on 24 March. Karnataka IT union's president VJK Nair presided and CITU president Hemalata guided.

Convener of the committee, K.C. Gopikumar, placed report. The convention documents on IT Industry, its employees' situation, the burning issues and the tasks were finalised as a guide for action for movement and building the organisation including tasks for

- Union's membership enrolment drive among IT, ITES, E-seva employees and others;
- Forming company-wise committees, wherever possible, within the union;
- Formulating demands for category-wise minimum wages;
- Study on the industry situation, particularly of different segments of ITES and the conditions of the employees;
- Formulating a draft of standing order for the employees in IT industry; and
- Study of the impact of the '4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution' for discussion in the next meeting.

The meeting also decided two immediate tasks:

1. Campaign, through social media and physically, among IT employees on the need to defeat BJP and strengthen the Left in the ensuing Parliament elections;
2. To hold 3 days residential workshop on Organisation, on 28-30 June 2019, at P. Ramamurti Trade Union Education & Research Centre of CITU in New Delhi including the coordination committee members. (*Inputs: K.C. Gopikumar*)

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

State	Centre	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	State	Centre	Jan 2019	Feb 2019
AP	GUNTUR	288	287	MHR	MUMBAI	300	302
	VIJAYWADA	292	291		NAGPUR	383	387
	VISHAKHAPATHNAM	292	291		NASIK	353	357
ASM	DOOM DOOMA TINSUKIA	272	272		PUNE	330	329
	GUWAHATI	271	272		SHOLAPUR	320	324
	LABAC SILCHAR	268	270	ORI	ANGUL TALCHER	327	326
	MARIANI JORHAT	256	255		ROURKELA	307	308
	RANGAPARA TEZPUR	248	248	PUD	PUDUCHERRY	311	313
BIH	MUNGER JAMALPUR	336	334	PUN	AMRITSAR	327	333
CHD	CHANDIGARH	305	305		JALANDHAR	318	318
CHS	BHILAI	323	323		LUDHIANA	289	291
DLI	DELHI	292	293	RJN	AJMER	284	284
GOA	GOA	325	329		BHILWARA	281	283
GUJ	AHMEDABAD	278	278		JAIPUR	297	299
	BHAVNAGAR	294	292	TN	CHENNAI	279	278
	RAJKOT	295	296		COIMBATORE	286	282
	SURAT	266	266		COONOR	325	325
	VADODARA	272	274		MADURAI	291	292
HRY	FARIDABAD	270	272		SALEM	292	287
	YAMUNANAGAR	290	290		TIRUCHIRAPALLY	298	296
HP	HIMACHAL PRADESH	266	266	TEL	GODAVARIKHANI	319	321
J&K	SRINAGAR	273	278		HYDERABAD	257	257
JRK	BOKARO	294	294		WARRANGAL	314	314
	GIRIDIH	340	343	TRP	TRIPURA	259	258
	JAMSHEDPUR	348	348	UP	AGRA	348	349
	JHARIA	358	356		GHAZIABAD	332	336
	KODARMA	380	381		KANPUR	333	335
	RANCHI HATIA	375	376		LUCKNOW	325	328
KNT	BELGAUM	304	303		VARANASI	322	323
	BENGLURU	294	292	WB	ASANSOL	329	330
	HUBLI DHARWAR	323	324		DARJEELING	273	272
	MERCARA	309	307		DURGAPUR	322	325
	MYSORE	311	309		HALDIA	335	336
KRL	ERNAKULAM	314	314		HOWRAH	278	281
	MUNDAKKAYAM	309	308		JALPAIGURI	277	277
	QUILON	362	357		KOLKATA	284	285
MP	BHOPAL	322	322		RANIGANJ	289	285
	CHHINDWARA	297	302		SILIGURI	269	276
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CITU Journal

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# 100 Years of Struggle & Sacrifices of the Working Class of India

From the Archives

## From: AITUC Founding President Lala Lapat Rai's Speeches

### In the Foundation Conference

"...Indian labour should lose no time to organize itself on a national scale... the greatest need in this Country is to organize, agitate, and educate. We must organize our workers, make them class conscious..." "For some time to come" (workers will need all the help and guidance and cooperation they can get from such among the intellectuals espousing their cause), "eventually labour shall find its leaders from among its own ranks."

### On 7<sup>th</sup> November 1920

"India... has been bled by the forces of organized capital and is today lying prostrate at its feet. Militarism and Imperialism are the twin-children of capitalism; they are one in three and three in one. Their shadow, their fruit and their bark all are poisonous. It is only lately that an antidote has been discovered and that antidote is organized labour."

### On nationalists attitude towards labour in Indian enterprises

"We are often told that in order successfully to compete with Manchester and Japan, capital in India should be allowed a high rate of profit and cheap labour is a necessity for that purpose . . . We are not prepared to admit the validity of this plea... An appeal to patriotism must affect the rich and the poor alike, in fact, the rich more than the poor . . . Surely . . . the way to develop Indian industries... is to be... (not) at the expense of labour alone... The Indian capitalist must meet labour half way and must come to an understanding with it on the basis of sharing the profits in a reasonable and just proportion... If, however, Indian capital wants to ignore the needs of labour and can think only of its huge profits, it should expect no response from labour and no sympathy from the general public."

### Call in the Foundation conference manifesto

"Workers of India! . . . Your nation's leaders ask for Swaraj, you must not let them, leave you out of the reckoning. Political freedom to you is of no worth without economic freedom. You cannot therefore afford to neglect the movement for national freedom. You are part and parcel of that movement. You will neglect it only at the peril of your liberty."



Police lathi charge on Lajpat Rai at Lahore



Portrait of 22 of the Meerut prisoners taken outside the jail. Back row (left to right): K. N. Sehgal, S. S. Joshi, H. L. Harkishan, Shantilal Usmani, B. P. Traflety, A. P. Wadgaonkar, G. S. Chikara. Middle row: H. S. Mirra, Jagan Chakravarty, Kishori Lal Ghosh, S. D. Kulkarni, J. W. Chugh, Ganga Shankar S. Hansotiya, K. N. Jadhav, P. C. Joshi, Manohar Abhad. Front Row: M. G. Doshi, D. Ganeshi, H. S. Shankar, S. S. Mirghat, S. A. Dange, S. Y. Chitr, Gopud Doshi.

Meerut Trial prisoners in front of jail

# 100 Years of Struggle & Sacrifices of the Working Class of India

## From the Archives



“Simon Commission Go Back”



Workers & people's uprising in Naval Mutiny

## And Now



8-9 January, 2019 countrywide strike by ten central trade unions & federations

## International Working Class Solidarity

(Report Page 19)

