

Monthly Journal of the AICWW(CITU)

Vol. 39 No.03 March 2019 10/-

The Voice of the Working Woman

Women Unite and Struggle!

**International
Women's
Day**



National Convention of Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (JEJAA) 27 February 2019

A National Convention of the representatives of all member organizations of Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (JEJAA), (National platform of mass, class, social and social organizations, movements and progressive individuals) will be held on 27 February 2019 at Constitution Club, New Delhi. The convention will launch a nationwide campaign on the main issues of the people to ensure the defeat of the BJP led government and decisively influence the policies of the next government.

National Convention of Workers 1 March 2019

The Central Trade Unions will organize a National Convention of Workers on 1 March 2019 in New Delhi to adopt a workers' charter. This is to bring the issues of the workers into the discourse during elections. The central trade unions will place the Workers' Charter before the political parties and compel them to concretely state their stand on these issues.

International Women's Day 8 March 2019

International Women's Day this year comes just before the country is going for Lok Sabha elections. The extended meeting of the CITU Secretariat has decided to utilise this occasion to bring some of the pressing issues faced by women in general and working women in particular into the political discourse, to bring more pressure for policy changes.

This IWD will be observed in a befitting manner, upholding its legacy as a day of struggle for equal rights and to end exploitation by organizing massive rallies/ mobilisations/ meetings at state/ district/ local levels.

<p><i>The Voice of the Working Woman</i> <i>Monthly Journal of the AICCCWW(CITU)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Editorial Board</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Editor K Hemalata</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Working Editor Ranjana Nirula</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Members A R Sindhu Sunanda Bhattacharya Anju Maini</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Inside</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%; text-align: center;"><i>Page</i></th> <th style="width: 30%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%; text-align: center;"><i>Page</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>On IWD</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td>Workers Demand Charter</td> <td style="text-align: center;">13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CITU IWD Call</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> <td>On Employment</td> <td style="text-align: center;">17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Women on the Move</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> <td>International</td> <td style="text-align: center;">20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>IT Convention</td> <td style="text-align: center;">11</td> <td>Alternate Manifesto</td> <td style="text-align: center;">22</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" style="text-align: center; padding-top: 10px;">Total pages - 28 (including cover pages)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<i>Page</i>		<i>Page</i>	On IWD	4	Workers Demand Charter	13	CITU IWD Call	6	On Employment	17	Women on the Move	8	International	20	IT Convention	11	Alternate Manifesto	22	Total pages - 28 (including cover pages)			
	<i>Page</i>		<i>Page</i>																						
On IWD	4	Workers Demand Charter	13																						
CITU IWD Call	6	On Employment	17																						
Women on the Move	8	International	20																						
IT Convention	11	Alternate Manifesto	22																						
Total pages - 28 (including cover pages)																									

For Pro-People, Pro-Worker Policies

Everyday, new reports, new revelations are coming out related to the BJP government's Rafale deal. A matter of serious concern is the increasing evidence of the PMO's direct involvement in changing the terms of the deal.

But what is clear by now is that it was solely Prime Minister Modi who took the initiative to scrap the old agreement, arrived at after following due procedures, and to replace the public sector Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd with the company of Anil Ambani, formed just a few days earlier, as the offset partner. This involved a steep escalation in price. The government has dropped the anti corruption clause. There is no provision for transfer of technology. All the Modi talk of 'Make in India' is now proved to be just rhetoric.

Even as clear evidence of the direct involvement of the Prime Minister, based on official documents, is coming out the BJP government continues to brush off questions with aggressive posturing. It is desperately trying to hide its attempts to favour its corporate cronies at the cost of the nation by raising the bogey of 'secrecy clauses'. The self proclaimed '*chowkidar*' stands exposed before the nation as one who has no qualms in sacrificing the interests of the nation in favour of his corporate friends, both within the country and outside.

As its five year tenure comes to an end, this BJP led government has proved to be not only a total failure, but a grave threat to the nation and its people. Giving a damn to all its pre poll promises, dismissing them as '*jumlas*', soon after coming to power the BJP government started attacking the hard won rights of the workers by fast tracking amendments to labour laws. Even before this sinister design could be achieved because of the stiff resistance of the entire working class, it started giving the right to 'hire and fire' to the employers through notifications on 'fixed term employment', NEEM and NETAP etc. Prices continue to escalate. Jobs continue to disappear. Peasants continue suicides. Agricultural workers and poor peasants continue to migrate in thousands in search of whatever work they might get in far off unknown places.

In the meanwhile, sensing the anger among the people, the BJP and its mentor RSS, desperately seek to divide people and workers and disrupt their unity, raising issues like Ram Mandir, cow protection and love jihad.

It is in this situation that the central trade unions, after the unprecedentedly successful two days' general strike has decided to call for a national convention and adopt a 'Workers' Charter' to place before the working class of the country as well as the political parties demanding that workers' issues and people's issues be included in their manifestoes.

This is the first time that the trade union movement has decided to come out jointly with a 'Workers' Charter' so that the workers' issues remain in the discourse during the elections through which people elect the governments that formulate policies. It is these policies that impact people's lives and livelihoods. Hence, it is the people who have the right to demand policies that are in their favour and not to benefit a few corporates and the super rich close to the ruling parties.

The BJP government has displayed total disregard and contempt for the issues of the people during its entire tenure. It arrogantly thought that it could do whatever it wanted through its majority in the Parliament and remain in power by polarising society on the basis of religion, caste etc.

This anti people, anti worker and anti national BJP must be taught a lesson in the ensuing elections. The working class must take the lead in rejecting and decisively defeating the BJP. That will enable taking the struggle for the reversal of neoliberal policies and for pro people and pro worker policies to a higher level in the coming days.

Women's Work

Hemalata

'What do you do?'

'Nothing'

'Nothing? How can you sit idle all through the day?'

'Sitting idle? Me? 24 hours a day are not enough to complete my work!'

'Then why did you say you don't do anything?'

'I meant I do not earn anything'

This is how women's work is perceived by most women themselves. Work that is paid – 'employment' – alone is commonly considered as 'work'. Work that does not get any remuneration, unpaid work is not considered 'work'. And a large portion of women's work is unpaid.

Domestic duties as well as collection of goods like vegetables, roots, firewood, cattle feed etc, water collection, sewing, tailoring, weaving etc for household use are not categorised as work by the National Sample Surveys. The majority of women spend most of their time in such work.

The National Sample Survey in 2012 found that women in rural areas, who have no water connections at their homes, had to spend 20 minutes for one trip to the source of water and wait 15 minutes for their turn at the source. In total they have to spend around 35 minutes for every trip and they have to make many such trips to meet the needs of their household. It was only 4 minutes less for a trip for women in the urban areas. Add to this the time rural women have to spend to collect fuel for cooking and fodder for the animals. The BJP government is spending hundreds of crores of rupees on advertisements claiming that its Ujjwala scheme had liberated women and empowered them to use their free time for developing their skills and improving their financial status. The reality is that women in most of these households continue to spend hours collecting fuel wood because they cannot afford to buy the subsequent gas cylinders after the first one they received is finished. It is found that more than half of the poorest women had to collect water and also fuel for cooking.

As is well known, India is one of the countries with very low levels of work participation rate of women. The work participation rate of women has been continuously declining. For rural women above 15 years, it has come down from 35% in 1999-2000 to 24% in 2011-12; for urban women it remained at a very low rate of 16.6%. Besides the lack of employment opportunities for women, this also reflects a shift from paid to unpaid work for women. While women spend more time than men doing work, work that is not only useful, but essential for the survival of the family, they are seen as 'not working' because their work goes unremunerated, unrecognised.

Analysing the data from various rounds of NSSO surveys on employment and unemployment, eminent economist Jayati Ghosh calculates that in India, more women work than men, if their unpaid work is also counted. In 2011-12, the total women's work participation rate was 86.2% compared to 79.8% for men!

This situation also reflects the failure of the State to provide the basic amenities to its citizens. Under the neoliberal regime, with the State withdrawing from this responsibility, the burdens on women have further increased because looking after the elderly and sick, taking care of the children and their education etc within the family are considered women's responsibility. The majority of women surveyed by the NSSO said that they wanted to take up paid work, but work was not available.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2018, released in December 2018, India ranks 142 out of 149 countries in economic opportunities for women and their participation in work.

Thus women, through their unpaid labour actually subsidise the employers and the governments who get away by paying below subsistence wages to the workers who are employed.

The lack of recognition of the work predominantly done by women not only impacts their social status but also their work outside their homes. The prevalent attitude in the society that women's work within their families, of cooking and serving food, of taking care of the sick and elderly, of looking after the children and their education, has no value is reflected in the manner they are treated and paid when they are employed for providing these services to the society. Not only women, even the men who are employed for such work are also treated the same way.

Thus we witness the appalling feature that around 1 crore 'scheme workers', mostly women but also some men, who are employed in government schemes, like the Midday Meal Programme, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, National Health Mission, Integrated Child Development Services, National Child Labour Project etc – who are employed to provide basic and essential services like midday meals, supplementary nutrition, health services to women and children, education and skill development of child labour etc are treated as 'social workers' and paid a pittance as 'honorarium' or 'incentive' etc.

Not only in economic participation of women; on the whole, India's rank in the WEF gender gap index, at 108, presents a dismal picture. It continues to rank the third lowest in the world on health and survival indicators for women; it is the country which has least improved its position in the last decade. In fact, the report indicates that the gender gap in this aspect has worsened.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Global Wage Report 2018-19, women in India are paid, on an average, 34.5% less than men. The wage gap is the highest among 73 countries studied in the report. The report says that women in India are paid the most unequally compared to men.

Unpaid work, lack of job opportunities, unequal wages are the serious challenges that women in our country face today. The recent 'Me Too' campaign revealed the extent of sexual harassment in the media and entertainment industries involving men at the highest levels. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. Sexual harassment at workplace is a daily nightmare for a large number of women.

The inferior status assigned to women in the present society has its root in patriarchy and private property as Engels has proved in his famous book 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State'. Neoliberalism has worsened their conditions. Withdrawal of the State from its responsibilities of social welfare, weakening labour law enforcement, amendments to labour laws, declining job opportunities, worsening working conditions, increasing use of women's bodies as commodities for profit – have all contributed to increased burdens on women and attacks on their dignity.

The conditions of the vast majority of women, particularly working women, have further deteriorated during the last around five years, under the BJP led government of Modi. The BJP government, guided by the ideology of RSS committed to *Manusmriti*, has been perpetrating retrograde and regressive attitudes towards women. Its violent campaign against the LDF government in Kerala for implementing the Supreme Court judgment on the right of women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala temple is the latest example.

On International Women's Day this year, when we reiterate our commitment to the fight for women's equality in all aspects of life and rededicate ourselves to carry forward the struggle to achieve this, we have to keep in mind that this requires the reversal of the neoliberal regime and also the communal, divisive and retrograde ideology of the RSS.

With the elections to the Lok Sabha approaching, our immediate task has to be ensuring resounding defeat of the BJP in these elections that would facilitate intensification of the struggle against the neoliberal regime aiming at its reversal.

On this International Women's Day, let us take a pledge to ensure this.

8 March 2019 – International Women’s Day

“For Equality, Dignity and Safety”

**For Paid Work for Women!
To End Violence against Women and Children!
For Adequate Representation in all Decision Making!**

Immediately after IWD this year, the country is going for the Parliament elections. CITU has decided to observe International Women’s Day this year, highlighting the most pressing issues of women in general and working women in particular, linking these to the elections under the topic “**For Equality, Dignity and Safety**”.

The most relevant issues which were the focus of our past struggles were.

- Women’s unpaid and underpaid labour including the recognition of the unpaid/underpaid care work of the scheme workers and denial of even statutory minimum wages and social security
- Violence against women and children in society including sexual harassment at the workplace
- Representation of women in decision making bodies including 33% reservation in Parliament and assemblies

These issues must be brought onto the agenda in the elections, through building public pressure.

Recognise and formalize Unpaid Work, Care Work by women

An ILO study in 2018 reveals a startling amount of women’s unpaid labour, particularly in care work. Unpaid work done by women across the globe amounts to a staggering USD 10 trillion a year, which is 43 times the annual turnover of the world’s biggest company Apple, revealed in a study by Oxfam. This is equivalent to over an eighth of the world’s entire GDP, and more than the GDPs of India, Japan and Brazil combined.

Women spend hours daily doing housework, cooking, housekeeping, care for children and elders, bringing water, fuel for home etc. As per ILO report, in India, the unpaid work done by women looking after their homes and children is worth 3.1 per cent of the country’s GDP. In addition they do a considerable portion of the cattle rearing and agriculture work of the family. Globally, 57 million unpaid workers are filling in the gaps caused by inadequate provision of healthcare. The majority are women who have given up employment to carry out this role. Women spend 312 minutes per day in urban areas and 291 minutes per day in rural areas on such unpaid care work. In India, the women’s work participation rate is as low as 20%.

A big section of women providing care work and services to almost half the population in our country, giving childcare, healthcare and nutritional supplements, the scheme workers- anganwadi, ASHA, mid day meal workers, are not considered ‘workers’ and are paid a meagre amount, far less than the minimum wage. Moreover, instead of institutionalizing these schemes and providing proper healthcare and childcare facilities for the vast section of unorganised sector women, the BJP led central government is determined to wind up these schemes step by step, by cutting down the financial allocations and by privatisation. Long pending demands of the scheme workers for the implementation of the 45 and 46 ILC recommendations of recognition as workers, minimum wages and pension are yet to be included in the agenda of the mainstream political parties except for the Left.

Equal wages are too far a dream for the majority of women workers in most of the sectors, for example in the construction sector.

Violence against Women and Children

Every day we see reports of violence against women, assaults, acid attacks, rape, murder etc in one or the other part of the country. Even small children aged 3-4 years are raped and killed. Attacks on women and rape are being used as tools of punishing or humiliating communities. We have seen this during the communal and caste violence in many places. Women from Dalit and minority communities are the worst sufferers.

Restrictions are imposed on what women wear, whom they speak to, where they go. In some places they are not even allowed to use mobile phones. Instead of punishing the culprits of violence against women, it

is the women who are punished with such restrictions. Women cannot choose their life partners, particularly if they are from other religions or castes. *Khap Panchayats* and 'moral police' harass them, attack them and even kill them and their partners.

The government talks of 'Beti bachao; beti padhao'. It talks of family planning. It talks of women's empowerment. But it makes no serious efforts to change the prevailing patriarchal attitude towards women, which treats women as inferior to men. It allows treatment of women as commodities, for commercial purposes, not as human beings.

The recommendations made by Justice Verma Committee set up immediately after the Nirbhaya incident - change in laws, criminal proceedings for handling the cases of violence against women and also institutional measures to provide safety for women in public - are yet to be implemented, even five years later.

One of the biggest problems faced by women at work is sexual harassment at the workplace. This affects women adversely and also poses a health hazard for them. More than five years after its passage, committees as per the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Prevention Act are not being set up even in the government sector.

Representation of Women in decision making bodies

33% reservation for women in parliament and state assemblies

33% reservation for women in local bodies and Panchayats is in existence since 1992 and more than ten lakh women are today discharging their responsibilities as people's representatives in the three tiers of the Panchayat system. 14 states have 50 per cent reservation for women in their local bodies.

The participation of women in decision making, achieved through reservation, has made positive changes in the priorities at local level and in the concept of real development. Success stories are pouring in from different parts of the country, of these women representatives, across caste and religious differences, making changes in the lives and livelihoods in their locality and empowerment of women. Many capable women leaders have emerged in the process. The inclusion of half the population in decision making can make democracy truly meaningful.

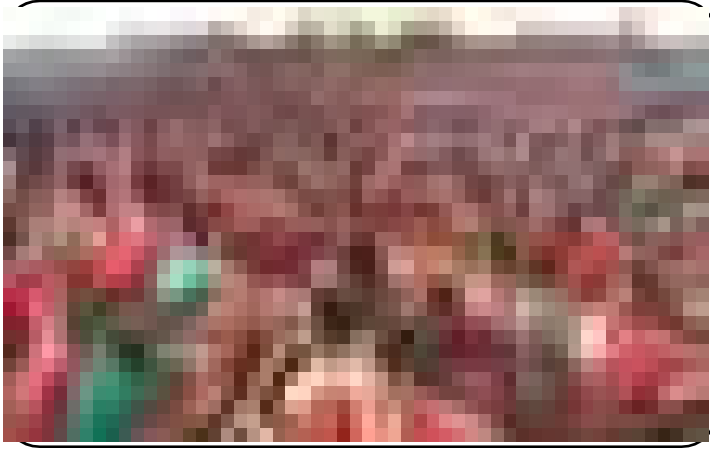
In spite of the success of reservation in local bodies, the representation of women in the crucial decision making process in assemblies and Parliament is still a distant dream in India. The bill was passed in Rajya Sabha in 2010, but lapsed in 2014, because the Congress(I) and BJP, which had declared support to the bill, backed out and put it in the Lok Sabha for not having 'consensus'. The BJP government also did not make any move in this direction. In selling off the country's precious assets there is consensus between these parties, but not to make democracy more meaningful by involving the deprived sections!

Ensuring more representation to women in decision making bodies will not only help in empowering women but also strengthen our democratic process as a whole.

Our Demands

- Recognise scheme workers including anganwadi, ASHA and Mid Day Meal workers as workers, pay minimum wages Rs.18000 per month and give social security including pension Rs.6000 per month. Minimum wages to all workers including domestic workers
- Equal pay for women workers
- Women's unpaid labour, especially care work, must be accounted in GDP.
- Ensure institutional care for children and the elderly to ensure women's participation in the labour force. Convert anganwadis to anganwadi cum crèches
- Concrete measures to end violence against women and children. Implement Justice Verma Committee recommendations. Complete legal and administrative measures in a time bound manner. Action taken report by central and state governments to be submitted. Wide social awareness and vigil programmes including gender equality in syllabus
- Implement the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act. Constitute the Complaints committees in all institutions immediately. Punitive action against the defaulting institutions and authorities
- 33% representation for women in Parliament and state assemblies to ensure meaningful democracy. Adequate representation for women in all decision making bodies

Karnataka Rajya Anganwadi Noukarara Sangha Conference



The seventh conference of Karnataka Rajya Anganwadi Noukarara Sangha (CITU) was held on 30 January -1 February 2019 at Basavakalyana, Bidar District. The conference started on 30 January 2019 with a colourful rally of anganwadi workers and helpers from the district. More than three thousand red volunteers marched with red flags in their hands, painting the small town red. Hundreds of local people came to the roadside to see such a colourful and disciplined rally of women

workers in the historic city of Basaveshwara, a 12th century social reformer in the state.

The public meeting was held in the huge community hall. The meeting was presided over by S Varalakshmi, President of the union. It was inaugurated by Usharani, President, AIFAWH and secretary, CITU. She spoke in depth about the anti worker policies of the Modi government and called upon the workers and helpers of the state to intensify the struggle. The meeting was addressed by A R Sindhu, General Secretary, AIFAWH, Meenakshisundaram, General secretary, Karnataka CITU, Maruti Manpede, President Kisan Sabha, Karnataka and Shanta Ghante, Working President of the union.

The delegate session started in the evening with Varalakshmi, hoisting the flag. Sunanda placed the report of the general secretary. Kamala placed the accounts.

A R Sindhu in her intervention, pointed out the organizational weaknesses and possibilities of the union.

On 31 January, the delegate session started with the discussion by delegates.

At 11.30 am a seminar was held on "The government policies, empowerment of women and ICDS". The Minister of WCD, Jayamala inaugurated the seminar. She promised the strengthening of ICDS and having bipartite discussion with the union. The seminar was addressed by H S Anupama noted writer, Adv.... and A R Sindhu. Yamuna Gaonkar chaired the seminar and presented the union perspective.

The delegate session continued after lunch and 34 delegates participated in the discussion. On 1 February, after the reply by the General Secretary the report was adopted unanimously.

A total of 367 delegates from 22 districts participated in the conference.

The credential report placed by Nagaratna revealed that more than 16% of the delegates are graduates or more. 20% belong to backward castes and minorities. 40% of the delegates joined the union before 2000. 46% of the delegates came from workers or agricultural labourer families. Almost 70% of the delegates have read the constitution of CITU.

A R Sindhu, in her concluding speech, explained the budget proposals on ICDS (since the interim budget of the NDA government was placed same day) and called for Delhi Chalo on 25 February 2019.

The conference re-elected S Varalakshmi as President, Shanta Ghante as Working President, H S Sunanda as General Secretary and Kamala as Treasurer with 23 Office Bearers, two of whom are helpers.

Women's Leadership Camp by KSRTEA Women's Sub committee



A women's leadership camp was conducted by Kerala State Road Transport Employees Association (KSRTEA) Women's sub- committee on 26-27 January 2019 at EMS Academy, Thiruvananthapuram. At a time when the number of women employees in KSRTC is increasing considerably and so are the problems they face, given the attitude of the management towards the workers, the two day trade union school and leadership camp was essential for the organisation.

The two day camp was inaugurated by A R Sindhu, national secretary, CITU. She explained the role of the women's sub- committee and the importance of taking up the special problems of women in the transport sector. She emphasized the importance of linking the social status of women to class exploitation in order to successfully continue the legacy of the renaissance movement in Kerala. The session was lively with discussions on workplace issues as well as the crisis in KSTRC.

In KSRTC, apart from ministerial staff, women work as conductors and mechanics and in other categories as well. Women conductors face harassment the most. They face problems of harassment from passengers. They face many problems during their menstrual cycle, when on long trips. There is no menstrual leave in KSRTC. The women's sub-committee had raised the demand for single seat for conductors in buses and could get it implemented especially in overnight long trips.

In the name of 'making KSRTC profit making', the management is bringing anti labour, anti women changes in KSRTC, the participants reported. Management violated all norms in transfer. This has created problems especially for conductors who are not getting accommodation in working women's hostels because of their duty hours sometimes exceeding the 7pm restriction in most of women's hostels. Women employees are even denied maternity leave by the management. Senior leaders recalled their successful struggle for equal pay for women workers when the women sweepers were paid less than men. The union is determined to fight all anti worker, anti women policies by the management.

In the second session, Dr. K N Ganesh, noted historian gave the historical perspective of the growth of communalism in India and the importance to fighting to root it out.

On the second day Adv. Dr. T Geena Kumari elaborated on the historical and constitutional basis of Indian nationality and the legal and social aspects of recent developments in Kerala including Sabarimala.

In the afternoon session C K Harikrishnan, General Secretary, KSRTEA explained the crisis in KSRTC, its reasons and possible alternatives. He detailed the role played by the KSRTEA and the importance of the current struggle to save KSRTC.

There was a lively evening on the first day with cultural activities by the participants. Nearly sixty participants from different categories and different depots throughout the state participated in the camp. The camp was led by Sheena Steephen, Suma, Sreedevi, all office bearers of the women's sub committee and Sunitha Kurian , Convenor, Kerala state Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU)

Mid Day Meal Workers Protest and Meet MHRD Minister

On 8 February a militant protest was organised all over India by mid day meal workers.

The workers expressed their anger on the streets because they were neglected and ignored by the BJP government in the central budget.

The protest was also organised in Delhi in front of Parliament, at Jantar Mantar. It was addressed by CITU National Secretary A.R. Sindhu, MDMWFI General Secretary Jai Bhagwan, AITUC leader Giri, AIUTUC Leader Bhaskar and AICCTU Leader Rajiv Dimri.



A five member delegation with Jai Bhagwan, Rajiv Dimri, Philomena John, Shahnaz and RK Sharma, led by D.Raja MP, met the MHRD Minister Shri Prakash Javedekar in Shastri Bhawan. The Minister spent half an hour with the delegation and discussed all the issues, mainly the enhancement of the remuneration of Mid Day Meal Workers. He assured the delegation that they will discuss the matter in the Cabinet and act positively. The matter of the striking mid day meal workers of Bihar was also discussed. The Minister said that they will intervene in this matter.

The leaders of the united platform of federations working among Mid Day Meal Workers have stated that if the government does not take any positive steps on the issues raised, the next course of action will be decided soon.

On Terrorist Attack in Pulwama

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women strongly condemns the terrorist attack on a CRPF convoy in Pulwama in Jammu & Kashmir. So far 42 CRPF personnel have been reported killed in this attack while many others are injured.

We decry the use of violence being used as a means to resolve issues that need resolution by discussion between all stakeholders in the state. This has not been done in the past several years and should be initiated forthwith.

The Central government must ensure the maintenance of peace and normalcy in the state and also take measures to immediately curb all attempts to utilize this incident to create animosity and spread violence and hate in different parts of the country.

The AICWW salutes the soldiers who laid down their lives in the line of duty and conveys its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

National Convention of IT and ITES Employees

A National Convention of IT & ITES employees was held at Chennai, Tamilnadu on 10 February 2019 at the initiative of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions. Around 180 leaders and IT and ITES employees from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Telangana, Maharashtra and West Bengal participated in the convention.

The convention was presided over by VJK Nair, the veteran trade union leader and president of the Karnataka IT Union. In his

presidential address he detailed the exploitation by the MNCs, particularly the IT companies, and the role of capital that exploits the entire workforce.

K.Hemalata, National President of CITU, inaugurated the convention. In her inaugural address she narrated the efforts that have been taken by the CITU center and emphasized the need for unionization of IT & ITES employees in India.

K.C.Gopikumar presented the background paper on the situation in the industry and the present status of the employees.

Employees organizations like AITE from Kerala, KITU from Karnataka, AITE from West Bengal, FORIT from Telangana, UNITE from Tamil Nadu and IT Union from Maharashtra, gave accounts of their state level activities and interventions in the IT & ITES sector.

A.R.Sindhu, National Secretary of CITU and R.Singaravelu, VP of CITU Tamil Nadu, greeted the participants and gave their valuable inputs for the direction of national level coordination.

The National Convention was greeted by one of the organizers of the November 2018 Google Employees Walkout and the General Secretary of World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). George Mavrikos, General Secretary, WFTU, in his message welcomed the National Convention and wished the delegates to undertake a relentless struggle until the emancipation of the working class and the abolition of exploitation of man by man.

A resolution was adopted with regard to job regularization and minimum wages for the Data Entry Operators in India. The resolution was moved by Jayalakshmi of Tamilnadu and seconded by Jayan of Kerala.

A paper on the 4.0 Revolution that is going to affect the IT industry, was presented by T.Baranidharan of Tamilnadu.

While concluding Tapan Sen, General Secretary CITU, welcomed the move to form a national level coordination by the independent IT & ITES employees unions from different states. He extended CITU's support for taking it forward to grow stronger and to win employees demands for better job security, attrition problem, retrenchment, respectful job and decent working conditions.

The National Convention formed a National level coordination committee comprising of 35 members from 6 states with K. C. Gopikumar as the National Convenor of the committee.

(Report from K.C.Gopikumar)



Decisions of the Extended Secretariat of CITU

The meeting of the extended secretariat of CITU, held on 6-7 February 2019 at BT Ranadive Bhawan, Delhi congratulated the working class of the country for the massive joint country wide general strike on 8-9 January 2019. It thanked all sections of toiling people for their support to the strike.

The extended secretariat, after reviewing the strike, took the following decisions:

1. The massive discontent visible among the people during the general strike should be consolidated and crystallised into a determination to defeat the Modi led BJP government in the ensuing Parliament elections. This is the immediate task in our efforts to intensify the struggle to defeat the anti worker neoliberal policies.
2. Our campaign for this must start immediately.
3. Efforts are being made for the joint trade union platform to adopt a 'Workers' Charter'. We should campaign widely on the Charter among all sections of the people to ensure that people's issues remain in the political discourse during the elections. We should thwart all attempts to divert the discourse away to non issues.
4. The topic for the International Women's Day this year will be intimated to you soon. To plan the observance of IWD, all CITU state committees should:
 - a. Immediately call meetings of the state committee tiers of the working women coordination committee and discuss preparations.
 - b. Discuss with the fraternal trade unions to ensure involvement of their respective women's subcommittees in joint actions
 - c. Ensure CITU affiliated unions in their states with women members activate their women's subcommittees and observe IWD
5. The 16th conference of CITU is scheduled in November/December 2019. The conference will be held on the basis of the membership in 2018. 2018 membership @ Rs 2 per member along with annual returns should be remitted to the CITU centre before the end of June 2019. All state committees should clear all the other pending dues of affiliation fees before March 2019.
6. All state committees should plan their conferences and start the process immediately after the elections are over.
7. The PRamamurti Centre must be made functional at the earliest. Our industrial federations and CITU state committees, mainly those in the neighbouring states, must plan its utilisation. Conducting classes regularly should be started immediately after the elections.

WORKERS CHARTER OF DEMANDS

Dear worker brothers and sisters!

We, the workers, along with the peasants and other toiling people produce the wealth of our country. It is we who contribute to the economic growth of our country. Yet our burning issues, our serious problems, and our urgent demands have been totally neglected by the government at the centre. The joint trade union movement has been repeatedly raising the issues of concern to the working class for the last many years. We have repeatedly tried through various means, the latest being the two days' country wide general strike which has received massive support from all sections of the toiling people, to bring our demands to the notice of the government and sought redress, but to no avail.

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

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

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

It is not implementing the Supreme Court judgment and the consensus recommendation of the ILC on equal pay and benefits to the contract, casual workers doing the same job as permanent workers. Despite the consensus recommendation of the ILC the government refuses to recognise the around 1 crore workers engaged in its various schemes, most of them women, as workers. It pays shamefully low remuneration to them in the name of 'honorarium'/'incentive' etc. Labour force participation of women is on a continuous down fall. Discrimination against women workers continues. Sexual harassment at the workplace is on the rise.

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

Despite strong opposition from the workers and their trade unions, the government is aggressively pushing ahead with its programme of amending labour laws, for its goal of climbing up the ladder of 'Ease of Doing Business Index'. It has decided to scrap 44 central labour laws merging them into 4 labour codes. The intention is to deprive the workers of whatever little rights and social security benefits they have achieved through decades of struggles and sacrifices and push them into becoming virtual slaves of the employers.

Even before amending labour laws it has found an innovative way to gift employers with the right to 'hire and fire'. It has extended Fixed Term Employment to all sectors through a notification. Through programmes

like NEEM (National Employability Enhancement Mission) and NETAP (National Employment Through Apprenticeship Programme), the government seeks to finish permanent employment altogether. Even contract workers are being replaced by apprentices and trainees. The future of our young looks dismal with no permanent employment, job security or social security.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Not only that. The government at the centre is promoting hatred and animosity and encouraging spreading of communal venom by the various communal organisations. This is meant to divide the workers and other sections of toiling people, disrupt their unity and weaken their struggles against the neoliberal policies. These attempts to foment hatred and hostility on the basis of religion, caste, region, language etc are a serious threat to working class unity, while the utmost need of the hour is to intensify our struggles against the neoliberal policies that have been attacking our lives and livelihoods.

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

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

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

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

Workers' Charter

1. Fix national minimum wage as per the recommendations of 15th Indian Labour Conference and Supreme Court judgement in the Raptakos & Brett case, which has been reiterated unanimously by later Indian Labour Conference.
2. Abolish Contract Labour system in perennial nature of job pending which strictly implement equal wage and benefits to contract workers doing the same job as permanent workers, as per Supreme Court judgment.
3. Stop outsourcing and contractisation of jobs of permanent and perennial nature.
4. Strict implementation of equal pay for equal work for men and women as per Indian Constitution and Equal Remuneration Act and also reiterated by the Supreme Court.
5. Minimum Support Price for the produce of the farmers as per the recommendations of Swaminathan Commission, strengthen public procurement system.
6. Loan waiver to farmers and Institutional credit for the small and marginal farmers.
7. Comprehensive legislation covering social security and working conditions for all workers including agricultural workers.
8. Take immediate concrete measures to control sky rocketing prices of essential commodities; ban speculative trading in essential commodities. Expand and strengthen public distribution system; no compulsory linkage of Aadhar to avail services of PDS.
9. Check unemployment through policies encouraging labour intensive establishments; link financial assistance/incentives/concessions to employers with employment generation in the concerned establishments; fill up all vacant posts in government departments; lift the ban on recruitment and 3% annual surrender of government posts.
10. Assure minimum pension of Rs 6000 per month and indexed pension to all.
11. Recognise workers employed in different government schemes, including anganwadi workers and helpers, ASHAs and others employed in the National Health Mission, Mid day Meal workers, Para teachers, teaching and non teaching staff of National Child Labour Projects, Gramin chowkidars etc as workers and pay minimum wages, social security benefits including pension etc to all of them.
12. Immediately revoke 'Fixed Term Employment' which is in violation of the spirit of ILO Recommendation 204 which India has ratified.
13. Stop disinvestment/strategic sale of public sector undertakings. Give revival package to the important PSUs in the public interest.

14. Revoke the decision to privatise Railways, Defence, Port and Dock, Banks, Insurance, Coal etc. Immediately revoke decision allowing commercial mining of coal mines.
15. Immediately resolve the issues of the central government employees related to the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission.
16. Scrap NPS and restore the Old Pension Scheme.
17. Stop anti worker and pro employer amendments to the labour laws. Ensure strict implementation of the existing labour laws.
18. Implement paid maternity leave of 26 weeks, maternity benefit and crèche facilities for women workers. No incentive be given to employers who are following amended provision of Maternity Benefit Act as proposed by the Government.
19. Strict implementation of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act.
20. Ratify ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining along with the ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers.
21. Strengthen Bipartism and Tripartism; make recognition of trade union by the employers mandatory in every establishment; no decision should be taken on any issue related to labour without consensus through discussion with trade unions, ensure regular, meaningful social dialogue with workers representatives.
22. Cut the subsidies given to the corporates.
23. Right to work as fundamental right by amending the Constitution.
24. 300 days of work under MGNREGA. Enact similar legislation to cover urban areas. Fix minimum wages not less than minimum wages of the state.
25. Strict measures to stop the inhuman practice of manual scavenging. Compensation, as per Supreme Court judgment, to **the families of** those who die while cleaning sewers.
26. Strict implementation of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act
27. Immediately fill up all backlogs in the posts reserved for SC/ST; reservation of jobs for SC/ST in private sector employment also.
28. Protect couples opting for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Ensure strict action against those encouraging/ resorting to so called 'honour killings'.
29. Ensure strict punishment for all guilty of rape and other cases of violence against women. Make such offences "Rarest of the rare" with capital punishment to ensure safety of women in letter and spirit.
30. Ensure effective implementation of Article 51 A of the Constitution that calls upon all citizens to promote harmony, spirit of common brotherhood, diversities and to transcend religious, linguistic, regional and sectional culture and to denounce policies derogatory to the dignity of women.
31. Free and compulsory education to all children up to Class XII along with technical education. The budget allocation for education should be 10% of the GDP.
32. Free health care for all. Strengthen health infrastructure, particularly in the rural and tribal areas. Increase government expenditure on health to 5% of GDP.
33. Workers should have active and effective participation in all welfare Boards constituted for their welfare.
34. Potable drinking water be provided to whole populace.
35. Fill up all already sanctioned vacant posts.
36. Lift Ban on recruitment in all Government and Public sector undertakings and also 3% compulsory annual surrender of post.
37. Lifting ban on new creation of posts on introduction of new work.
38. Protection of street vendors should be ensured. States should frame rules accordingly.
39. In order to protect the interests of Home Based Workers which is a women dominated sector ILO Convention 177 for Home Work be ratified along with an Act for Home Based Workers.
40. The unspent amount of cess collected under Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board be spent only on welfare of workers. Welfare Boards should have adequate workers representation.

Employment: Truth vs Lies

Savera

Unemployment is death by a thousand cuts. The unemployed person suffers the torture of frustration and grief, while his or her family – children, aged parents perhaps – await a job so that they can again eat. Modi had promised one crore jobs every year when he was seeking votes, five years ago. This single promise had raised hope among many families. But his government's disastrous economic policies have pushed India into a furnace of joblessness. The latest CMIE data shows that the unemployment rate in India was 8.6% in the first week of February 2019. This is the highest level since September 2016, that is, in 127 weeks. Earlier this month, a report prepared by the NSSO was leaked by a newspaper which showed that the unemployment rate in 2017-18 had hit a 45-year high of 6.1%. Although the National Statistical Commission Chairman and another member asserted that the report was final and should have been released, the government is refusing to do so, thus revealing its desperate attempts to hide the truth about unemployment.

Last year, CMIE had reported that youth unemployment was at a staggering 32% while women's unemployment rate was 14%. This level of joblessness has destroyed family budgets and pushed lakhs into poverty. It is forcing people to migrate to other places in search of jobs. It is snatching away food from babies' mouths and medicines from the sick. CMIE estimates show that 1.1 crore jobs were lost in 2018 itself. So, far from creating jobs, the Modi government's policies have actually caused enormous job losses. The 2016 *notebandi* (demonetisation) and the subsequent GST imposition destroyed the small scale and informal sectors causing lakhs of jobs to be lost. Dilution of labour laws, fixed term employment and such other policies have added to the relentless loss of jobs.

The Truth Behind Modi's Lies

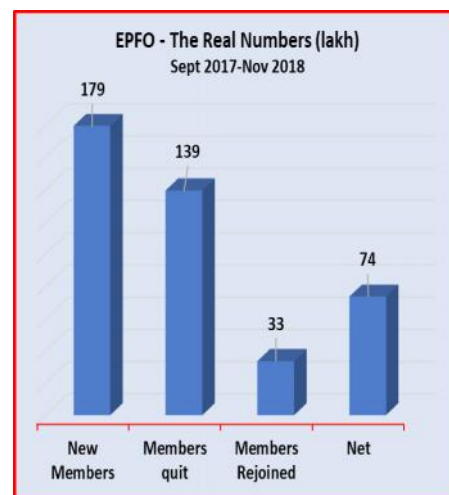
Yet, Prime Minister Modi, his ministers and other BJP leaders continue to maintain the fiction of job creation. In a recent speech in Parliament, Modi arrogantly maintained that his government had created crores of jobs. He quoted figures from provident fund scheme and pension scheme enrolment, as also numbers of doctors, chartered accountants, lawyers and truck or bus operators and hotels, to claim that crores of jobs were added. Here is a look at what Modi claimed and why it is untrue.

#1 – PF Enrolment: Modi said that between September 2017 and November 2018, 1.8 crore persons started contributing to EPF for the first time. Out of these 1.8 crore, 65 lakh were below the age of 28 years. He added that enrolment in the pension scheme (NPS) increased from 65 lakh in March 2014 to 1.2 crore in October 2018.

There are two fallacies in this:

1. The latest data, available on EPFO website, does show that 1.8 crore people enrolled in the scheme between September 2017 and November 2018 but 1.4 crore persons quit the scheme! It even gives the number of persons (33 lakh) who quit but rejoined. [See Chart below] Modi is quoting the new joining numbers and claiming that these are new job entrants. But what about those who are quitting? By his logic they should be becoming jobless!

2. The truth is that joining the EPF scheme does not mean that a worker has got a fresh job for the first time. He or she may have been working in some other job elsewhere before getting this job. Or, even more likely, he or she



would have been working on the same job and the employer was not giving them the right to EPF coverage till now. Here, it should be recalled that Modi has launched a new scheme called PM Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY), which subsidises employers for enrolling employees in EPF scheme by paying the employers' share of PF and NPS contribution (12%). This has prompted many erring employers to enrol their workers in the EPF scheme just to get benefits of the subsidy. According to replies given to Parliament questions, Rs.2871 crore has been given to 1.14 lakh enterprises as subsidy under the PMRPY. It is quite likely that cunning employers are simply rotating their employees in and out of the scheme so that they can gobble up the subsidy. There are no new jobs being created – it is just an illusion.

The same applies to enrolment in the pension scheme. There is no proof that those enrolled were fresh entrants in the job market.

#2 Professionals: Modi claimed that 6.35 lakh new professionals like doctors were added to the category of non-corporate tax payers implying that these are new jobs. All those who start paying tax are not new job entrants. And, even if this was the case, the total number of such jobs adds up to 6.35 lakh in nearly five years. That means, about 1.2 lakh jobs every year! This trend was there even before Modi came to power. There is nothing new in this. And, if you really think about it, it exhibits a rather pathetic record in job creation even for the well-to-do middle class.

#3 Transport Sector: Modi claimed that since 2014, 36 lakh new trucks or commercial vehicles, 1.5 crore passenger vehicles and 27 lakh autos have been purchased. On this basis, he said that 1.25 cr jobs have been created in the transport sector. Transport experts say that the Modi government policy of imposing ban on 10-year and 15-year old vehicles has led to increase in sales in the automobile sector which was otherwise deep in crisis. However, the new vehicles are giving jobs mostly to drivers, cleaners, conductors or mechanics who were working with older vehicles earlier. Is there any record or proof that those persons who are driving these new vehicles were doing nothing before that? There is none. Maybe they were driving old vehicles, maybe they were working in the fields or as manual labourers or in some office. There is no reason to believe that they are getting a job for the first time. Yet Modi uses this trickery to befool people.

#4 Tourism: Modi claimed that there was a 50% hike in approval of hotels and went on to assert that 1.5 crore new jobs were created in the tourism sector. Again, the problem with this is – are they new jobs or are people moving from one job to another? Nobody knows, least of all Modi himself. Also, how many hotels have closed down – this also needs to be compared.

Incidentally, the recent fire in a Delhi hotel which killed 17 people, and the report that over 250 hotels in Delhi have no fire safety measures points to what 50% hike in new approvals can do.

#5 Mudra loans: Modi claimed that 4.25 crore “first timers” got loans but he clarified that there is no job data. He wants to imply that these are persons who got work for the first time. But just because somebody takes a loan for the first time, it doesn't mean that he/she was starting to work for the first time! He/she could have been doing some other work earlier. In fact, Mudra loans do not indicate any job creation in itself. The amounts per loanee are too meagre to imagine this. According to the most recent data for 25 January (Rajya Sabha Question No. 170 and 189) a total of 15.74 crore persons have been given loans worth Rs.7.35 lakh crore. Which works out to a mere Rs.46,702 per loanee. What can be expected to happen with this amount! Meanwhile, there are reports that Mudra loans have been freely distributed without asking for any minimal details of the loanee and without any investigation by banks. In one case, CBI has raided a bank on this complaint. Some even suggest that BJP supporters have been mobilised and given loans.

Hidden Unemployment

One very serious and tragic aspect of the jobs crisis that is often neglected by commentators is that of under-employment which is also called hidden unemployment. Most people are forced to

work for very meagre wages because there are no well-paying jobs available. According to previous NSSO reports, around 35% of the workforce is under-employed. They earn way below their needs and their capabilities or qualifications.

In almost all the states, statutory minimum wages as fixed by state governments are less than half of Rs. 18,000 which has been accepted as the minimum wage by the 7th Pay Commission for government employees, based on the 15th Labour Conference norms and the 1992 Reptakos Brett Supreme Court judgement. We all know that even these very low minimum wage levels that are notified are not implemented by the bulk of employers.

Workers have to work 10-12 hours just to get enough to survive. In rural areas, the condition of agricultural workers is even worse with a mere 2.5% increase in wages between 2014 and 2018 after adjusting for inflation. In rural as well as urban areas people are either working long hours or doing multiple jobs for a few hours each just to make ends meet. Seasonal, irregular and temporary work has become the new norm. All this is hidden unemployment.

Why This Crisis of Unemployment

It is clear that the Modi government has failed to create jobs. Every year, about 1.2 crore persons cross the age of 15 years and thus become eligible to be counted as members of the labour force, as per government definitions. Among these, about half are not seeking work because they are either still studying, or not yet ready for working. Or, they may be girls who are not allowed to work by families. So, about 60 lakh persons are added to the workforce every year by natural growth. If jobs are not provided to these people, the backlog of jobless people goes on increasing every year. That is why, there are an estimated 7 crore persons who are unemployed currently,

What should any government do to create jobs? There are many policies that can be adopted. The initiative needs to come from the government itself by filling up the vacancies in Central and State governments. It has been estimated that an incredible 60 lakh posts are lying vacant in central and state government put together. This includes over 10 lakh school teachers, over 1.5 lakh college and university teachers, 2.2 lakh anganwadi workers/helpers, another 2.2 lakh health personnel like doctors and nurses, 7 lakh police personnel, 2.5 lakh posts in Railways, 57,000 in P&T etc. The Confederation of Central Government Employees & Workers Federations has reported that there are over 4 lakh vacant posts in central government ministries and allied establishments. Meanwhile the All India State Government Employees Federation has reported that vacancies in all the state govts. put together are around 30 lakh at least, and possibly more. Besides this, the government needs to step up public investment in a big way by putting money in industrialisation, expanding key infrastructure, assisting agriculture by constructing irrigation measures and boosting farmers' incomes, increasing wages of workers and employees, etc. Through a combination of this kind of spending not only will jobs be created directly, but it will increase the spending power of millions of people which in turn will create the demand for more goods, leading to a growth in production also. This will lead to more jobs being created.

In fact, investment is flagging, credit is growing at a tardy pace, exports are down and sectoral output growth rates are too small to expect any significant growth in jobs. Modi's vision has a double limitation – one is the neo-liberal dogma that unemployment is bound to exist, and in fact, is a good thing to have; and the other is the RSS engendered ignorance about real economy. The government has been shamelessly pushing a policy that keeps workers and farmers incomes down in order to boost corporate profits, inviting foreign capital also to exploit Indian labour, allowing imports of more and more goods which destroy domestic production and giving concessions to the private sector in the hope that it will create jobs. But that has failed miserably. Hence the lies, day in and day out.

Hotel Workers Strike from East Coast to Hawaii

Focus is on low wages, healthcare, and sexual assault

Muffy Sunde

The largest hotel strike in North American history erupted nationwide this year. Poverty wages, staggering workloads, devastating healthcare cuts and no protection from sexual assault topped the grievance list. Strikes targeted luxury hotels, particularly in the notoriously anti-union Marriott chain. Workers at 26 Chicago hotels walked out in early September and were followed by San Francisco, Boston, Honolulu, Maui, Detroit, Oakland, San Jose and San Diego in a few weeks.

Then, on December 7, workers at twenty-four of the biggest hotels in Los Angeles County voted to strike. Some have still not settled. Each walkout powered the next and public support made headlines. Some cities, like Boston, had never seen a hotel strike. There hasn't been a major hotel strike in most U.S. cities for decades.

Anger over poverty and abuse

"We work for one of the richest employers, but the workers are being left behind," Courtney Leonard, a striker at Weston Boston Waterfront told *Labor Notes*. *"There are room attendants working into their seventies. It's heartbreaking. They are here because they need the health insurance. They can't retire."* Leonard herself drives 100 miles daily to and from work because she can't afford to live in the city. *Housekeepers are often isolated from other hotel workers, making them particularly vulnerable to harassment and assault. Issuing "panic buttons" to staff is one demand of the strike.*

The Marriott hotel chain, the strike's main target, has more workers than Boeing or Microsoft and sets industry standards for wages and benefits. Profits have increased 279 percent since the 2008 recession, reaching \$3.2 billion dollars in 2017. Meanwhile their workers, who are overwhelmingly women and largely African Americans or immigrants of color, have received a paltry one percent annual wage increase.

During negotiations the union insisted on up to \$25 per hour to match the ballooning cost of living in big cities like Honolulu, San Francisco and Chicago. It demanded year-round health insurance, because staff lose benefits during slow season layoffs. Management responded by offering to raise wages by *cutting* healthcare benefits.

Workers have faced many other hardships that were addressed at the bargaining table. They fear being replaced by machines. They strain under constant speedup that cost jobs and cause injuries. So, they demanded lower workloads and access to newly created positions as technology eliminates other work. One bartender told the union that he was ready to strike because he wants to keep his job. Already laid off once after eighteen years, he said he knows he is never safe.

Hotel workers also have had zero protections from sexual assault by customers. A survey conducted by UNITE HERE Local 1 in Chicago found that 49 percent of housekeepers reported having had guests answer the door naked or expose themselves. Fifty-eight percent of hotel workers and 77 percent of casino workers surveyed have been sexually harassed by a guest. Staff need protections like those won in Chicago to require that hotels provide *"panic buttons"* to workers assigned to clean or restock rooms alone. And the Chicago ordinance forbids reprisals against those who report guest assaults. The slogan *"hands off / pants on"* popularized this demand on strike banners and signs across the country.

But hotels refused to meet any basic demands. Their workers across the country voted to strike.

As the strike began, housekeepers led with the chant “*One job should be enough.*” They cited examples of workers having to put in full-time shifts at luxury hotels and then night shifts at laundromats to survive.



Labor-community pressure wins public support

Workers spent weeks during negotiations building support. Immigrant women, already seasoned in community and neighborhood organizing, were some of the best spokespeople the strike had. They spoke to other unions and community groups, and organized friends and supporters to rally and picket. Informed and intractable rank and file leaders united a strike force that often spoke three different languages. Freedom Socialist Party’s Nancy Kato organized other activists to join the lines, reporting that “*We helped strikers surround the hotels with squads of community and other labor supporters.*”

Hotel bosses tried unsuccessfully to recruit scabs. Instead, guests who stayed in the hotels found their rooms weren’t cleaned, the restaurants were closed, and they had to walk through loud picket lines to get inside. Guests on Waikiki were asked to strip their own beds and pick up clean linen and change sheets themselves.

Public pressure was so great that both Honolulu’s mayor and the governor publicly boycotted events at struck hotels and called for management to meet strikers’ demands.

A strike wave that isn’t over

Strikers set new, higher standards for the industry. But hotels settled separately and there haven’t been public comparisons between contracts. What has been verified is that wages have gone up — up to 40 percent in some cases. Workers are now part of the planning for new technology and can apply for new jobs that will come open. And all reports say that emergency alarms will be provided to hospitality workers who must clean or serve alone. The increased workloads caused by hotels letting guests opt out of daily cleaning will now be scheduled for more time, because rooms left for days take longer to clean. This resulted in 20 new positions at one Chicago hotel.

But healthcare benefits, though improved, still have loopholes, and just how much wages have increased is unknown. The disadvantage of having individual hotels negotiate, strike, and settle separately is that some work groups are left on their own. Workers at Chicago’s Cambria Hotel remain on strike after five months. Several hotels in Los Angeles have no contracts. A better approach would be to negotiate a master agreement for all union hotels to maintain solidarity and standards.

One big takeaway

The predicted collapse of labor following the Supreme Court anti-union decision in the Janus case didn’t happen. In fact, the strike wave that began with teachers defying their state governments or school boards has continued with thousands of hotel workers popularizing the demand for decent lives. Surely labor is in a far stronger position than it has been for years.

(Source: Freedom Socialist Press)

Manifesto for Change 'Reclaiming the Republic: 19 issues for elections 2019'

A group of eminent citizens outline reforms for India's judiciary, media, education, healthcare, police and social welfare system.



Anjali Bhardwaj, Harsh Mander, Prabhat Patnaik, Justice AP Shah, Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav at the release of 'Reclaiming the Republic' plan. | Sonal Hayat Feb 05, 2019

Prashant Bhushan, Anjali Bhardwaj

We are a group of concerned citizens. We have varied political opinions and affiliations, but we are united in our trust in democratic institutions, in our adherence to the philosophy of the Constitution and belief in the idea of a plural, democratic Republic of India. Deeply concerned, of late, over the multiple challenges to the Republic, we have undertaken to examine these challenges in some depth, and to propose to our fellow citizens means to protect and strengthen the Constitutional safeguards for our democratic polity and composite society. We see the forthcoming Lok Sabha election as an opportunity to retrieve and, indeed, reclaim from manipulation and subversion, our legacy of the Republic.

The situation today calls for urgent reforms in law, policies and institutions. This involves, first of all, restoration or undoing the damages inflicted by the current ruling establishment: ensuring proper operation of the rule of law in our country, non- interference with judiciary and anti-corruption institutions, the integrity and fairness of our administrative structures and, last but not least, the vigorous energy of our media in reporting national events with freedom, accuracy and responsibility. But undoing the damage is not about a simple roll back. The roots of some of these challenges go back to the earlier times. We require reconstruction and substantial measures to ensure that similar damage cannot be done in the future. Unless we reignite the spirit of the Constitutional resolve to secure justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity and carry out programmes in that direction, we cannot hope to involve a majority of Indians in this national duty.

Accordingly, we place before the country specific ideas and measures for recovery, reconstruction and reorientation. The range of reforms that we propose include:

Democratic liberties

1) Doing away with antiquated and draconian laws that have been widely misused to curtail personal liberties and intimidate political activists.

Repeal of Section 124A (sedition) and 499 (criminal defamation) of the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities Prevention Act and the National Security Act and amendments to the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and Foreign Contributions Regulation Act as well as the existing laws on blasphemy and criminal contempt of legislature and judiciary.

2) Electoral reforms aimed at reducing the influence of money power in elections and making the electoral system more democratic.

Reverse the Electoral Bond scheme and other recent regressive changes to the laws on electoral funding, bring a comprehensive law for election financing reforms and set up a National Election Fund for state funding of election.

3) Media reforms aimed at making the media freer, more diverse and accountable through an independent regulator.

Media Freedom Bill along the lines of the First Amendment in the United States that guarantees freedom of expression and removes all arbitrary restrictions such as pre censorship broadcast of news on radio, arbitrary internet shut down. Set up Independent statutory licensing and regulatory authority, independent statutory complaints authority and make Prasar Bharati truly independent public service broadcaster.

Welfare state

4) Universal basic services and social security for all citizens.

Universal public provision of good quality social services including education, health, maternal care and early childhood care; universal access to food security through Public Distribution System in rural areas with addition of nutria-cereals, pulses and oil to the ration, universal pension for the aged at half the minimum wages and special provisions for specially disadvantaged groups; reorient fiscal policy towards employment: allow for increased spending that can create jobs by investing in the creation of public goods.

5) A “new deal” for the farmers comprising assured income, freedom from indebtedness and sustainable farm practices.

Statutory assurance of remunerative prices (at least 50% on C2 Cost of Cultivation); One-time comprehensive loan-waiver, along with a National Debt Relief Commission; timely and effective relief from disaster related distress; Reduce the cost of inputs and remove all legal and vigilante-imposed restrictions on cattle trade; extension of all benefits meant for farmers to tenant farmers, sharecroppers, women farmers, Adivasi farmers, landless cultivators and livestock rearers.

6) Turning Right to Education into a reality.

Properly staffed and funded government schools; ensure that every school is Right To Education compliant; expand RTE to age 16 and early childhood education; end shortage of teachers by filling regular vacancies; a national campaign to sustain universal functional literacy and numeracy.

7) Well endowed, regulated and autonomous higher educational institutions.

Allocate an additional 1% of GDP for public universities with a special programme to revive and support state universities and affiliated colleges; ten-fold increase in fellowships for all social and economically deprived students; restoring and strengthening autonomy for higher educational institutions.

8) Affordable and accessible health care for all through public health delivery system.

Raise government expenditure on health care to 3% of GDP with three-fourths of additional increase to be funded by the central government; strengthen government health system at all levels, with primacy being accorded to primary, preventive and promotive care; pooled procurement of generic medicines; stronger public health cadre with two ASHAs; regulation of private health system and medical colleges.

9) Extension and expansion of MNREGA to guarantee to every adult at least 150 days of work a year at minimum wages.

And expand the employment guarantee programme to provide 150 days of work to all adults in rural and urban areas, at minimum daily wage (by category according to state).

10) All vacancies must be filled in education, health and other essential public services.

And all workers in essential services (health, education, cleaning) must be treated as regular public employees, including those currently classified as volunteers in anganwadi, MDM and ASHAs.

11) Additional expenditure on these to be met by active fiscal strategy for raising resources.

At least 20% inheritance tax, wealth tax in rising slabs for wealth above Rs 10 crore, corporate social tax linked to turnover, not profits; green taxes to encourage less carbon emissions, pollution tax. These would generate anywhere between 3% to 5% of the GDP as additional revenue.

12) An independent and empowered Environment Commission to lay down environmental standards and regulations and ensure their compliance.

An autonomous agency to conserve and protect the rivers, increase the number of air quality monitoring stations in highly polluted areas, a national energy policy for phased shift to decentralised and renewable energy over the next fifteen years and incentivise public transport and non-motorised private vehicles; nationalise oil and gas and recognise communities as trustees, custodians and shareholders of their natural resources.

Social Justice

13) Assure minimum critical presence of women in decision making.

Amend the Constitution and laws to provide for at least one-third representation of women in parliament and state assemblies as well as in judiciary and police.

14) Enact a comprehensive anti-discrimination law.

And constitute an Equal Opportunity Commission to oversee implementation of such a law, which covers all vulnerable groups, prevent rising hate crimes against religious minorities and disadvantaged castes by creating criminal culpability of public officials, statutory backing for Tribal Sub-Plan and Special Component Plan and legal changes for reversing tribal land alienation.

15) Special programmes for most vulnerable social groups.

National mission to end manual scavenging and sewer workers death and full implementation of the Prohibition of Employment as manual scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013; State support for educational, housing and other facilities for protection and development of denotified tribes, nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples; mandatory disability audit of all policies and schemes of the government and public institutions, implementation of reservations, childcare for disabled persons and effective ICDS integration of all disabled children.

Transparent and accountable governance

16) Repair the damage done to anti-corruption laws and institutions. Undo the regressive amendments made to the Prevention of Corruption Act, set up the Lokpal in a transparent manner, operationalise the Whistle Blowers Protection Act and enact the Grievance Redressal Bill.

17) Strengthen accountability and transparency.

Reinforce independence of institutions of oversight such as CBI, CVC, CAG, strengthen the Right to Information regime, introduce pre-legislative consultation and make social audit mandatory for all public schemes.

18) Making the judiciary more independent, efficient, transparent, representative and accountable. Independent judicial appointment commissions to select judges, independent judicial complaints commission, professional court management team and video recording of court proceedings.

19) Police reforms fully in accordance with the seven directions of the Supreme Court in the Prakash Singh case.

The Model Police Bill 2006 to be a starting point to modulate the relationship between the police and the political executive.

Endorsed by Members of Reclaiming the Republic, February 2019.

Justice AP Shah (Chairperson), Prashant Bhushan (Convenor), Anjali Bhardwaj (Convenor), Aakar Patel, Aruna Roy, Bezwada Wilson, Deepak Nayyar, EAS Sarma, Gopal Guru, Gopal Gandhi, Harsh Mander, Jayati Ghosh, Kavitha Kurugant, Krishna Kumar, Nikhil Dey, Paul Divakar, Prabhat Patnaik, P Sainath, SP Shukla, Srinath Reddy, Sujatha Rao, Sakthi Selvaraj, Ravi Chopra, Syeda Hameed, Vipul Mudgal, Wajahat Habibullah, Yogendra Yadav

On the media report that thousands of crores of rupees of EPF funds invested in tradeable bonds in IL&FS

14th February 2019

Shri Santosh Gangware
Minister of Labour & Employment
Govt of India
Shram Shakti Bhawan
Rafi Marg, New Delhi

Dear Sir,

I seek to draw your pointed attention to the media report that thousands of crore rupees of EPF funds invested in tradable bonds in IL&FS group have been put on risk of being lost as the group companies are facing near bankruptcy situation and presently in the midst of resolution procedures in National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) under section 53 of the Insolvency Bankruptcy Code Act (IBC).

As per the report, over 50 EPF funds of various companies, both in PSUs and number of private sector giants involving the post retirement savings and benefits under EPF of over 15 lakh employees have been put in such risk following their exposure to IL&FS. And since the tradable bonds of IL&FS in which the EPF funds of such huge dimension has been invested are being considered as unsecured debt of IL&FS and thereby losing priority vis-à-vis debts from the banks and financial institution in the resolution process under IBC, the risk of loss has become more imminent.

Kindly recall, the workers' representatives in Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of EPFO have been consistently opposing the investment of EPF funds in any speculative tradable instruments, but the Government of India bulldozed the unanimous opposition of the workers representatives and channelized a part of EPF funds for investment in speculative instruments. Now, you will see the results as the life-time savings in EPF of the concerned workers and employees of the affected establishments, is being pushed to the possibility of imminent loss of even the invested amount itself, not to speak of interests.

I strongly feel, the Government must draw the appropriate lesson from such happening and review the decision imposed by the Finance Ministry to invest EPF fund up to 15% in speculative trade instruments of all kinds. Government must also take the responsibility of protecting the EPF savings of the employees/establishments which have already been pushed to risk of loss owing to their exposure with IL&FS group along with interest since concerned workers should not be subjected to loss of their savings for no fault of theirs but for wrong unilateral decision of the Government.

I would also urge you to send us the details of investment exposure of EPF funds with IL&FS bonds both for the funds under CPFC and also for the exempted establishments entity-wise so that actual situation can be ascertained and dealt in a transparent manner in the interest of fairness, transparency and propriety.

Awaiting expeditious response,

With regards

Yours sincerely,
(Tapan Sen)
General Secretary, CITU

Women Farmers Keep Suicides at Bay

Shaken by the 338 farmer suicides in and fearing for the lives of their husbands, some women from the villages in parched Osmanabad (Maharashtra) have taken over farming operations to keep home and hearth together.

The effort has raked in enough produce to see them through the drought, with a little cash in their hands. It is also bringing MBA students and officials from the Agriculture University in Marathwada to their doorstep seeking guidance on sustainable farming, despite the women farmers being school dropouts or even illiterate.

The parched land in Osmanabad where crops have failed has pushed many over the brink, but suicidal thoughts have never once crossed Vaishali Ghuge's mind. *"I am proud to be a farmer and my land in Tuljapur taluka yields more than enough for my family to survive. Why should I even think of suicide?"* she said. At a low point in her life, Vaishali did say that she felt sad being married to a farmer. *"Farming and farmers have no value. But I have changed this picture for myself and my family,"* she added.

Archana Bhosale backed her story of toil with statistics. *"The average yield from my field is worth Rs 2 lakh. Even if the crop fails, I have a small poultry which gives me returns of about Rs 1.5 lakh. There is no need to worry or get distressed,"* she said. Like Vaishali and Archana, many women have taken over the farming operations from their husbands and are producing better results. *"A few years ago, we witnessed a similar drought like now. Women got together and shared thoughts about what will happen to our families if our men fall into a depression and take some hasty step. We realized that we must do something,"* Rekha Shinde from remote Hinglajwadi recalled.

When she spoke to her husband about wanting to help him in farming operations, he ridiculed her. *"Farming is difficult and women cannot do it,"* he told her.

But the other women in Hinglajwadi joined Rekha and made similar demands from their husbands. Komal Katkate said their actions were not planned, but they were worried about their children. *"The suicides and distress all around us made us determined to do something. We thought we should be able to feed our children. We would need grain, pulses and vegetables that need less water to grow. Our men were producing nothing of this. They were after cash crops like sugarcane and soybean,"* she added.

The men were in no mood to hand over the reins. *"We asked them for one guntha (about 1,000 sq ft) to cultivate vegetables and pulses. Reluctantly, they agreed. We wanted to grow some food for our families to survive. Women know 80 per cent of farming, but they are never called farmers,"* Kausalya Katkate, now in her sixties, said.

It was a slow beginning. When two women got a guntha of land from their husbands, and the other women grew insistent, the men gave them some land.

"We grew vegetables with whatever farming knowledge we had. When there was sufficient for our families, we sold the extra produce in the nearby markets. For the first time, we had our own money," Rekha said.

With little support and no money to buy fertilizers, they took to organic farming. *"Vegetables and pulses don't need much water,"* Nanda Wakure said.

The 'change-of-hands' started in 2012 and within a year the women were earning more from the farmland they cultivated than the men who sowed water-guzzling crops using chemical fertilizers, the women said.

“We grew confident enough to inquire about government schemes for farmers,” Godavari Kshirsagar, from Gandora village in Tuljapur, said.

The women also formed a small savings group and started sharing their experiences, with men watching them closely. “When they realized we were not asking for money or water but



we were earning better, they started seeking our advice on the crop to be sown and how to avoid spending on chemical fertilizers,” Anita Kulkarni said. She also markets organic fertilizers made on her farm.

The women also took to other sources of income. Archana has a small poultry farm, Anita and others rear cattle. Some sew clothes or run flour mills.

Many women farmers are district and state awards recipients. “We have - just gone back to the basics like avoiding cash crops, using organic fertilizers, ensuring food security and creating additional income,” said Godavari. She addressed MBA students recently and shared her experiences with the agriculture university in Parbhani. The university will hold a camp for its students in her village.

Komal Katkate’s husband Achyutrao admitted that women had changed their lives. “I have stepped back. My wife Komal is the lead player now. I go by what she says on crop cultivation,” he added.

(Courtesy: The Times of India)

**FORM IV
(See Rule 8)**

Place of Publication : 13-A, Rouse Avenue,
New Delhi, 110 002

Periodicity of publication : Monthly

Printer’s Name : K.Hemalata

Whether citizen of India : Yes

Address : 202, V.P. House,
New Delhi-1

Publisher’s Name : K.Hemalata

Whether citizen of India : Yes

Editor’s Name : K.Hemalata

Whether citizen of India : Yes

Name and address of the
owners or shareholders
holding more than one
percent of the total capital : All India Coordination
Committee of Working
Women (CITU) ,
13-A Rouse Avenue,
New Delhi – 110002

sd/-
K. Hemalata

Read and Subscribe to

The Voice of the Working Woman

**Single Copy: Rs. 10/-,
Annual Subscription: Rs. 100/-
Send MO/DD favouring
‘Centre of Indian Trade Unions’**

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

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

**"DON'T LET
ANYONE
TELL YOU
YOU'RE WEAK
BECAUSE
YOU'RE
A WOMAN."**

- MARY KOM

Printed by K. Hemalata and published by K.Hemalata on behalf of the AICCWW(CITU), 13-A, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi 110 00
Ph: 011-23221306, Fax: 011-23211284, Email: aiccww@yahoo.com, Website: www.citucentre.org and
printed at Progressive Printers, A-21, Jhilmil Industrial Area, G T Road, Shahdara, Delhi-95. Editor: K.Hemalata